

The Rhetorical Use of Animals in Early Modern French Literature

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ABSTRACT

Brian Donovan Johnson: The Rhetorical Use of Animals in Early Modern French Literature
(Under the Direction of Dr. Hassan Melehy)

In his *Essais*, Montaigne presents a picture of humanity that destabilizes the conventional assumption of human preeminence. Borrowing from forerunners Sextus Empiricus, Lucretius, Plutarch, and other thinkers of antiquity, Montaigne uses animals as part of the process of destabilization. Nowhere is this more evident than in his “Apologie de Raimond Sebond,” in which comparisons between humans and animals underscore the affinity of the two. Humans are not semi-divine creatures, but animals who differ from other terrestrial creatures only in relative ability and not in essence. This concept of human nature served as a backdrop for future discussions on the relationship of humans and animals throughout the seventeenth century. It is the aim of this dissertation to show via the analysis of French texts from throughout the century that the focus of debate over the relative natures of humans and animals shifted as the century advanced.

The hypothesis of this dissertation is that Descartes’s *Discours de la méthode* instigated this shift. This is important because the shift is indicative of the influence of Descartes on French thought in the latter half of the century and the continuing dissension amongst French thinkers regarding the relationship of humans and animals that Montaigne treats in his “Apologie.” Whereas Montaigne used animals to humble humanity by pointing out the presumptuousness of the prerogatives it claims, Descartes conceived of a clear demarcation

between humans and animals that re-establishes human difference and superiority on the basis of the possession of an immaterial rational soul.

Following the publication of the *Discours*, “la querelle de l’âme des bêtes” became the focal point of examinations into animal nature. Likewise, the nature of the animal soul moved from the background of discussions concerning the relationship of humans and animals to the forefront. This shift is not absolute, but an examination of representative works before (Montaigne’s “Apologie” and La Mothe Le Vayer’s *Dialogues faits à l’imitation des anciens*) and after (Cyrano de Bergerac’s *L’Autre monde* and Gabriel de Foigny’s *La Terre australe connue*) the publication of Descartes’s *Discours de la méthode* and *Méditations métaphysiques* reveal that a shift had taken place.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation addresses certain representations and discussions of animals in early modern French literature, specifically in texts whose point is not so much to explain animal nature but rather to define human nature. Hence, the status of animals in these texts is primarily rhetorical, functioning in an argument or demonstration of something other that has little to do with animals in and of themselves, although sometimes the texts go into great detail about them.

Works have been included because they illustrate a number of important aspects of the rhetorical use of animals, as well as a shift that occurs in the discussions following some major philosophical developments. The starting point is Michel de Montaigne, whose observations on and stories about animals do in fact offer enough material to construct a theory of animal nature. In the “Apologie de Raimond Sebond” (2.12), Montaigne outlines many animal abilities and provides an explanation of real animal behavior.

For this reason, the “Apologie” is of primary importance. Descriptions of animal behavior and capabilities constitute a large part of the essay, but the goal of these passages is to demonstrate the commonality of human and animal nature. That arguments establishing a distinction between humanity and God constitute an even larger part of the “Apologie” indicates that situating humanity is Montaigne’s principal concern. I concur with Donald M. Frame that Montaigne’s “central concern” is “man and his life,” and that “from the first his subject was man” (9). The passages concerning animals in the “Apologie,” in addition to whatever other functions they fulfill, are one part of Montaigne’s larger project of defining humanity.

As for the change in the rhetorical use of animals that takes place in the seventeenth century, they follow on Descartes' theories, which pose the question of animal reasoning abilities in order to establish an immaterial human soul and mark a clear distinction between humans and animals. Although she does not elaborate on the change in her work, Isabelle Moreau notes its essence in *Guérir du sot*:

Dans le contexte des controverses suscitées par les théories cartésiennes, la question de l'accession éventuelle de l'animal à la raison et au langage articulé se transforme. Elle était jusque-là évoquée, dans la continuité de Montaigne et Charron, pour ôter à l'homme un peu de sa superbe ; elle en vient à bousculer les critères de la spécificité ontologique de l'homme. La radicalité des thèses de Descartes provoque, en effet, une cristallisation du débat sur la nature de l'âme humaine en termes de matérialité/spiritualité de la pensée. (GS 452)

The purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate the rhetorical nature of the animal examples in each of the works under examination, which extends beyond the animal language and reasoning abilities Moreau mentions, and to reveal how each supports Moreau's claim that a change in the nature of the debate on the human soul took place.

In addition to chapters on Montaigne's *Essais* and Descartes's notion of the animal-machine, this dissertation addresses the Gassendi-Descartes controversy, La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens*, Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde*, and Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre australe connue*.

The first two chapters display examples of the rhetorical use of animals to humble humanity. Montaigne is the starting point since his "Apologie" encapsulates the ancient tradition of using animal nature to define human nature and initiates early modern dialogue on human-animal comparisons. The *Essais* and La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens* are not the only works that use animals to combat the notion of human superiority, but are general examples of this style of use. La Mothe Le Vayer rather than the example

Moreau mentions, Pierre Charron, receives a chapter because Charron's role as disciple of Montaigne is already well established and his *De la sagesse* well known. His animal examples also lack the literary creativity of La Mothe Le Vayer, who infuses his *Dialogues* with great wit and humor while exhibiting a remarkable imagination. The *Dialogues* are also noteworthy because they contain debate on the nature of the human soul with little recourse to animal examples, and thus provide contrast to works following the publication of Descartes's *Discours de la méthode*.

The chapters on Descartes's animal-machine and the Gassendi-Descartes controversy outline the source of the shift in the rhetorical use of animals toward an emphasis on the question of the nature of the human soul. Descartes sparked the shift in 1637 with the publication of the *Discours de la méthode* in which he makes a clear distinction between humans and animals on the basis of the possession of an immaterial soul. Gassendi cemented the connection between animal nature and the nature of the human soul by referring to animal examples in his *Disquisitio Metaphysica* to confound Descartes's arguments for an immaterial soul. Both are using real animal behavior to make their points, and Descartes's theories provide a broad definition of animal nature, but the primary purpose of animal examples in each case is to illuminate the nature of the human soul.

The emphasis Descartes and Gassendi place on animal nature as they probe the question of the human soul influences later authors. The two remaining chapters substantiate this influence. Moreau correctly notes that the "cristallisation du débat sur la nature de l'âme humaine en termes de matérialité/spiritualité de la pensée" that Descartes incited "est déjà présente dans les romans cyraniens" (GS 452). Animal examples accompany the question of the nature of the human soul in Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde*, while elsewhere in the text the

author continues the skeptical tradition that precedes him of using animal examples to question human superiority. Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre australe connue* shares these characteristics. Written in Switzerland and published in 1676, Foigny's work is evidence that the connection between animal nature and the nature of the human soul was still strong nearly forty years after the publication of the *Discours*, and that Descartes's influence over French literature extended beyond the Parisian literati.

The six chapters together serve to frame change in the rhetorical use of animals as they expose its particularities in individual works.

Scope and Importance of Dissertation

One aim of this study is to shed light on a shift in the rhetorical use of animals that took place following the publication of Descartes's *Discours de la méthode*. Descartes used the theory of the animal-machine to establish an immaterial soul exclusive to humans. The works in this dissertation published after the *Discours* all demonstrate the rhetorical use of animals to elucidate the nature of the human soul. The examples in these texts are a starting point for further study. Evidence of change in a greater number of works would establish the increased use of animals to elucidate the nature of the human soul following Descartes's theory of the animal-machine.

Another goal of this study is to provide representative examples of a typical rhetorical use of animals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the rhetorical use of animals in each work differs, they share the common trait of using animal nature to define human nature. The rhetorical use of animals in each of the texts that appear is significant for varying reasons. In the case of Montaigne, previous study of the use of animals in the "Apologie" centers on

Montaigne's conclusions in favor of animal reasoning and language ability and human-animal commonality. This study examines the "Apologie"'s animal passages in full to expose the depth with which Montaigne demonstrates the commonality of human and animal ways of reasoning and communicating. A complete treatment of these passages also brings attention to the characteristics other than reason and language that Montaigne uses to establish a nature common to humans and animals.

In other cases, this study promotes interest in lesser-known works. This is true of La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens*. La Mothe Le Vayer is the subject of an increasing number of literary studies, but his *Dialogues* do not receive as much attention as his other works. The dialogue format of the former allows him to consider differing positions by placing them in the mouths of different speakers. He is thus able to draw upon varying schools of thought or propose paradoxical arguments without definitively claiming any as his own. He combines these traits with a strong dose of humor that results in a literary genre of interest for its own sake.

An examination of the animal-machine is necessary to this dissertation not only because it triggers a change in the rhetorical use of animals, but also to clarify its rhetorical function in the *Discours*. The latter provides the background to the Gassendi-Descartes controversy. The Gassendi-Descartes controversy may not have taken place if Descartes had not established an immaterial human soul. Animals may not have played an important role in their debate if Descartes had not developed the animal-machine in response to earlier thinkers such as Montaigne who argued for human-animal commonality.

The Gassendi-Descartes controversy itself was an important part of the "cristallisation du débat sur la nature de l'âme humaine en termes de matérialité/spiritualité de la pensée" Moreau

remarks (GS 452). The text that most clearly documents the controversy, however, Gassendi's *Disquisitio Metaphysica*, receives almost no critical attention. One goal of this dissertation is to display the merit of this lesser-known work, which proves to be an interesting showcase of the personalities and argumentative styles of Descartes and Gassendi besides being necessary to a demonstration of the rhetorical use of animals in their debate. A reading of the text uncovers the insurmountable epistemological rift that exists between the two philosophers and the extent to which each understood the other's position and argumentative strategies.

An explosion of critical studies of the work of Cyrano de Bergerac has taken place in recent decades and his *L'Autre monde* has been at the center of this research. *L'Autre monde* appears in this study mainly to provide evidence in support of a change in the rhetorical use of animals following the publication of Descartes's *Discours*. The chapter on Cyrano de Bergerac does, however, provide a closer reading of the two trials in the *L'Autre monde* than previous studies. Furthermore, the protagonist's discussion with a moon youth on the nature of the human soul confirms Moreau's observation that discussions about the human soul crystallize around the question of the soul's materiality/immateriality following the publication of Descartes's theories. The treatment that this passage receives in this dissertation emphasizes the place of the rhetorical use of animals in this crystallization.

Beyond its importance to this dissertation's goal of highlighting a change in the rhetorical use of animals, the chapter on *La Terre australe connue* adds to the extensive work of Jean-Michel Racault and Pierre Ronzeaud by presenting a new reading of Foigny's text. The link between humans and animals is a binding force throughout the work and it is possible to understand the protagonist's journey in terms of his relationship to animal nature. By

constructing a reading in terms of animality, this final chapter responds to Ronzeaud's desire for "d'autres recherches sur le sens et la cohérence de la *Terre Australe Connue*" (15).

CHAPTER 1: MONTAIGNE'S "APOLOGIE DE RAIMOND SEBOND"

In his “Apologie de Raimond Sebond,”¹ Montaigne outlines his vision of human nature by opposing humanity to animals. Given mankind’s similarities to animals, Montaigne concludes that human nature is decidedly terrestrial and animal. Nonetheless, Montaigne’s conclusion is provisional, since he bases his judgment on what the evidence of his senses and his own reason determine to be most likely, and, in skeptical fashion, he believes both the senses and human reason imperfect and prone to error. As a result, Montaigne’s concept of human nature lacks clear definition, as he stresses humanity’s ignorance of the nature of animals, which he uses to assign humanity a place in the universe, and of itself: “In short, man knows no more of himself than he does of God, and since he does not know himself, he knows nothing” (Frame 68). Whether one considers human nature directly or indirectly via opposition to animals, it remains largely outside of human understanding. Montaigne concludes his comparisons of humans and animals by remarking that if there is reason to believe that one thing defines humanity, it is the body by which humans differ from animals and not reason, a faculty he endeavors to show common to both. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how Montaigne used animals rhetorically to situate humanity.

Montaigne’s Predecessors

¹ See Pierre Villey for an accurate outline of the essay (Montaigne 438), Donald M. Frame gives another in his *Montaigne’s Discovery of Man* (58-60), Robert Aulotte in his book on the essay (62-65), Thierry Gontier in *De l’Homme à l’animal* (43-44, 157-58), and perhaps the most detailed occurs in Marcel Conche’s *Montaigne ou la conscience heureuse* (197-200).

Many of the animal anecdotes that Montaigne uses to demonstrate animal reasoning in the “Apologie” come directly from Plutarch, but the overall skeptical message of Montaigne’s human-animal comparisons owe more to Sextus Empiricus. In each case Hugo Friedrich claims Montaigne’s borrowings follow the originals “fairly exactly” (122). Friedrich names Pliny and Lucretius as further models. Montaigne does not always acknowledge his sources, but he either quotes or explicitly mentions all of the authors above.

The idea of the Great Chain of Being, which Raymond Esclapez describes as the “image d’un ordre naturel, symbolisé par une échelle” that Saint Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas inherit from Aristotle and Saint Augustine (201), looms over the “Apologie de Raimond Sebond.” This is primarily because the man Montaigne set out to defend, Raimond Sebond, affirmed its existence (Esclapez 202-03), while Montaigne’s essay dismantles it. What Montaigne defends is Sebond’s right to engage in theological debate, but he disagrees with his conclusions.

Montaigne’s predecessors form the backdrop against which his arguments for human and animal equality take place. In addition, his borrowings provide authoritative support for his position. The “Apologie” is important because it compiles a wide array of these animal stories and supplements them with contemporary accounts of animal behavior. Montaigne also provided a contemporary voice for dissent from human superiority and the preeminence of reason.

Subverting Human Presumption with Comparisons to Animals

Following his assertion that “[I]a presumption est nostre maladie naturelle et originelle,” Montaigne attributes human suppositions about animal nature and human superiority to vain

imagination: “C’est par la vanité de cette mesme imagination...qu’il [Man] se trie soy mesme et separe de la presse des autres creatures, taille les parts aux animaux ses confreres et compaignons, et leur distribue telle portion de facultez et de forces que bon luy semble” (452). Although this is the first mention of human understanding of animal nature in the “Apologie,” already Montaigne signals his belief that humans and animals are of like nature, referring to animals as “confreres” and “compaignons.” The separation of human nature and animal nature is human fantasy, and the nature humans assign to animals is biased: “L’homme pense être une exception dans la nature, il ‘se trie’ de la foule des créatures et, s’étant comparé à elles, se met au premier rang. Volontiers il se figure être le but final et la justification de toute la nature. Ce n’est là qu’une illusion” (Conche, MCH 52). Montaigne counters beliefs in an animal nature fundamentally different from human nature and the conclusion that humans are superior to animals by defying proponents of these opinions to produce arguments to support them based on comparisons between humans and animals: “Comment cognoit il [Man], par l’effort de son intelligence, les branles internes et secrets des animaux ? par quelle comparaison d’eux à nous conclud il la bestise qu’il leur attribue ?” (452). Conversely, it is by comparisons between humans and animals that Montaigne intends to demonstrate not only human ignorance of animal nature, their own “bestise,” but also the shared nature of the two, thereby nullifying the difference that “bestise” implies in the dual sense in which he employs the word: referring to animality itself and the presumed lack of animal rationality.

Donald M. Frame understands the human-animal comparisons in the “Apologie” as Montaigne’s first step in the fight against rationalism: “His first step is to show, by countless tall tales, that we are no cleverer, no happier, and no better than the animals. We are neither spoiled nor neglected, neither above nor below the rest. In our pride we have left nature’s way, and we

are the worse for it” (63). Despite human reasoning ability, the quality of animal and human life is equivalent.

Montaigne’s first comparison is between himself and his cat. As Montaigne questions his understanding of his cat, he places it in a position of equality with himself and even presents the possibility that in the particular circumstance he describes, the cat holds a superior position:

“Quand je me joue à ma chatte, qui sçait si elle passe son temps de moy plus que je ne fay d’elle,” he wonders (452). Montaigne professes his own ignorance regarding his cat’s understanding of the world, while raising the possibility that both he and his cat profit from their relationship in like fashion, with his cat perhaps reaping greater reward than himself.

Montaigne’s query as to the nature of his cat leads into the opinions of Plato, whom Montaigne reads as acknowledging both the superiority of animals over humans in specific domains and a general equality of the two stemming from the relative utility of individual species’ abilities:

“Ce grand auteur a opiné qu’en la plus part de la forme corporelle que nature leur a donné, elle a regardé seulement l’usage des prognostications qu’on en tiroit en son temps” (453). This initial comparison presents the pattern of many of Montaigne’s human-animal comparisons. He first raises doubt as to human understanding of a certain facet of animal nature, and then argues from comparison between humans and animals in favor of relatively equal abilities with the goal of establishing commonality. Montaigne uses this process to establish commonalities in many areas, and the remainder of this chapter covers his arguments in each one to show that in every case the human-animal comparisons are rhetorical devices.

Animals and Humans Share Language

The first area of commonality Montaigne considers is the ability to use language. He questions the supposition that animals are unable to communicate with humans because they lack language by noting that humans, too, are unable to communicate with animals. Just as in the case of his cat, Montaigne assumes the position of the animal, in this case imagining reasoning animals, capable of language, assuming humans to lack speech by their lack of communication as he continues to play with the dual sense of “bestise” and its cognates: “Ce défaut qui empesche la communication d’entre elles [animals] et nous, pourquoy n’est il aussi bien à nous qu’elles ? C’est à deviner, à qui est la faute de ne nous entendre point : car nous ne les entendons non plus qu’elles nous. Par cette mesme raison, elles nous peuvent estimer bestes, comme nous les en estimons” (453). Montaigne is highlighting human ignorance of the animal condition, and the presumptuousness of the assumption that lack of communication with animals indicates a defect in animal nature; in fact, the source of this lack is “à deviner.”

After placing the belief that animals are without language in doubt, Montaigne proceeds by offering evidence in favor of animal communication. Montaigne takes his arguments from both classical sources and his own experience. He cites numerous Ancients who claimed to understand the language of animals and the work of cosmologists that supports the idea of communication between animals before moving to common experience (453). From human experience, Montaigne concludes that even our ability to communicate with animals, indicating interspecific communication, is not a trait that sets humans apart. Interspecific communication is not limited to communication between humans and animals, animals communicate amongst themselves, as well : “En certain abbayer du chien le cheval cognoist qu’il y a de la colere ; de certaine autre sienne voix il ne s’effraye point” (453). Interspecific communication is grounds for commonality not difference.

Such communication is possible even for animals without vocal abilities, for Montaigne contends that body language and signs are as viable methods of communication as the spoken word: “Aux bestes mesmes qui n’ont pas de voix, par la société d’offices que nous voyons entre elles, nous argumentons aisément quelque autre moyen de communication : leurs mouvemens discourent et traictent” (453). Animals communicate via bodily signs, and thus exhibit their similitude with humans: “Pourquoy non, tout aussi bien que nos muets disputent, argumentent et content des histoires par signes ? [...] les amoureux se courroussent, se reconcilient, se prient, se remercient, s’assignent et disent enfin toutes choses des yeux [...] Quoy des mains ? [...] Quoy des sourcils ? quoy des espauls ?” (454). For Montaigne the linguistic equality that exists between humans and animals is inescapable: “Nous avons quelque moyenne intelligence de leur sens ; aussi ont les bestes du nostre, environ à mesme mesure. Elles nous flatent, nous menassent et nous requierent ; et nous, elles” (453). Montaigne is using his own observations in this case to draw his reader to the obvious communication that takes place between humans and animals despite the lack of a common spoken language.

Montaigne revisits the question of animal language later in the “Apologie” when he discusses the Greek philosopher Cleanthes’ study of ants. Montaigne uses the story which consists of two parties of ants convening and apparently negotiating the terms of ransom for the return of a dead comrade (468). Montaigne uses the anecdote as further evidence of animal communication, citing Cleanthes’ conclusion that the ants engage in negotiation: “Voilà l’interpretation que Cleanthes y donna, tesmoignant par là que celles qui n’ont point de voix, ne laissent pas d’avoir pratique et communication mutuelle, de laquelle c’est nostre defect que nous ne soyons participans ; et nous entremettons à cette cause sottement d’en opiner” (468). The story supports several of Montaigne’s earlier claims: that animals communicate amongst

themselves, that even animals without vocal abilities are capable of communication, and lastly, that animals have means of communication that humans cannot always understand. Montaigne is using Cleanthes' anecdote to stress human ignorance of animal nature.

Despite his contention that humans are ignorant of animal nature, Montaigne does offer his own opinions on the subject, leaving himself open to the criticism that by his own argument, his conclusion that animals and humans are of like nature rests on suppositions that are unverifiable. Assuming that Montaigne is aware of this difficulty, one can conclude that Montaigne's purpose in drawing comparisons between humans and animals that point to a common nature is not to establish with certainty this fact.

According to Hassan Melehy, Montaigne's intent is to examine questions that may have no clear answer: "For Montaigne, it is not a matter of knowing with certainty that animals speak or possess intelligence, but rather of certain phenomena presenting questions that may have to remain questions; the reasoning of animals is hence the subject of the unending inquiry that marks the procedure of the *Essays*" (SA 270). Montaigne intends to counter claims to human difference and superiority with arguments every bit as reasonable as his adversaries'. Directly prior to his attack on human superiority with respect to animals, Montaigne proclaims his intention to fight the reason of Sebond's attackers with his own reasoning: "Mais ceux cy veulent estre foitez à leurs propres despens et ne veulent souffrir qu'on combatte leur raison que par elle-mesme" (449). Arguing for an animal nature equivalent to human nature is part of this process. Montaigne constructs a common nature for both animals and humans by demonstrating their similarities, and the ability to communicate is one of these similarities. Therefore the purpose of the passages in the "Apologie" that treat animal language is not to establish the existence of animal language per se; Montaigne uses these passages as a rhetorical device to

establish a nature common to both humans and animals that in turn challenges human superiority.

Montaigne's Reason

Montaigne's conception of reason is essential to his consideration of the equivalence of animals and humans, so it is necessary to examine his particular definition of reason before proceeding to his demonstrations of animal reasoning ability. The role and importance of reason are a recurring topic in the *Essais*, and Montaigne begins to define the nature of reason in the first book. At the end of essay XLVII, "De l'incertitude de nostre jugement," Montaigne reflects on the role of fortune over all aspects of human lives, including reason:

Ainsi nous avons bien accoustumé de dire avec raison que les evenemens et issuës dependent, notamment en la guerre, pour la pluspart, de la fortune, laquelle ne se veut pas renger et assujectir à notre discours et prudence [...] Mais à le bien prendre, il semble que nos conseils et deliberations en dependent bien autant, et que la fortune engage en son trouble et incertitude nos discours.

Nous raisonnons hazardeusement et inconsiderement, dict Timæus en Platon, parce que, comme nous, nos discours ont grande participation au hazard. (286)

Montaigne places his opinion in contrast to the common one, that events depend upon fortune, escaping the designs of our reason. Montaigne includes our thoughts and judgments, reason itself, along with the course and outcome of events as dependent upon fortune. His statement of the belief lacks force, as it includes qualifiers like "il semble" and "pour la pluspart." Montaigne's treatment of the subject here fails to match the commanding tone of the "Apologie," but at least begins to shape his concept of reason.

Reasoning involves one's internal discourse and wisdom. This applies specifically to the topic of this essay, human judgment, in the form of deliberation and its resulting intent, "conseils et deliberations" (286). Reason is understood in its processes, and not as a faculty. As a process,

it is subject to the dictates of fortune just as the course of daily events is. This conclusion is attenuated by the expression “grande participation au hazard,” which, although forceful, falls short of stating that humans’ internal discourse is completely arbitrary.

Montaigne revisits the subject in the eighth essay of the third book, “De l’art de conferer,” whose topic is closely aligned to that of “De l’incertitude de nostre jugement.” As in the essay from the first book, Montaigne states that fortune determines most of the world’s events:

On s’aperçoit ordinairement aux actions du monde que la fortune, pour nous apprendre combien elle peut en toutes choses, et qui prend plaisir à rabatre nostre presumption, n’ayant peu faire les malhabiles sages, elle les fait heureux, à l’envy de la vertu. Et se mesle volontiers à favoriser les executions où la trame est plus purement sienne. D’où il se voit tous les jours que les plus simples d’entre nous mettent à fin de tresgrandes besongnes, et publiques et privées. Et comme Sirannez le Persien respondit à ceux qui s’estonnoient comment ses affaires succedoient si mal, veu que ses propos estoient si sages, qu’il estoit seul maistre de ses propos, mais du succez de ses affaires c’estoit la fortune, ceux-cy peuvent respondre de mesme, mais d’un contraire biais. La plus part des choses du monde se font par elles mesmes... (933)

The same qualifier, “la plus part,” that limits the functioning of fortune over the outcome of human affairs, appears again when Montaigne extends the influence of fortune to reason: “Je dis plus, que nostre sagesse mesme et consultation suit pour la plus part la conduite du hazard. Ma volonté et mon discours se remue tantost d’un air, tantost d’un autre, et y a plusieurs de ces mouvemens qui se gouvernent sans moy. Ma raison a des impulsions et agitations journallieres et casuelles” (934). As in “De l’incertitude de nostre jugement,” Montaigne restricts the role of chance in human reasoning. By stating that his reason wanders on many occasions without him, Montaigne implies that there are other occasions where he has an active role in the direction of his thoughts.

What remains unclear is the extent to which Montaigne believes he controls his reason, how he ascertains that these thoughts are under his control, by what mechanism this control takes place, and what connection his control has to free will. Philip Hendrick shows that Montaigne's translation of Sebond's work tends to weaken the original's claims for free will: "Ainsi 'operatur ex libero arbitrio' devient 'il manie...ses actions à sa fantaisie et volonté'. Le mot technique est remplacé par deux mots qui mettent l'accent sur la nature imprévisible du libre arbitre" (150-51). The implication is that Montaigne's free will is less disciplined and less capable than Sebond's. Montaigne's primary concern in "De l'incertitude de nostre jugement" must be the arbitrary flow of human internal discourse, and not the nature of whatever control humans might actually possess over their thoughts, for he leaves this question unanswered.

In the eleventh essay of the third book, "Des Boyteux," Montaigne acknowledges his preoccupation with the arbitrary course of human reason: "Je ravassois presentement, comme je faicts souvant, sur ce, combien l'humaine raison est un instrument libre et vague" (1026). He ties the reason's meandering to the vain quest for the cause of things, which, as in the "Apologie," belongs to God alone: "La cognoissance des causes appartient seulement à celui qui a la conduite des choses, non à nous qui n'en avons que la souffrance, et qui en avons l'usage parfaitement plein, selon nostre nature, sans en penetrer l'origine et l'essence" (1026). Thierry Gontier rightly concludes that "La raison humaine ne saurait être la mesure de l'être : c'est la *nature* qui est mesure de l'être, et cette nature échappe à toute tentative humaine de rationalisation" (79). The proper place of humans is in the use of things, not the understanding of their essence.

In "Des Boyteux," Montaigne also reiterates reason's inability to arrive at truth and its tendency to arrive at falsehood at every turn: "Nostre discours est capable d'estoffer cent autres

mondes et d'en trouver les principes et la contexture. Il ne luy faut ny matiere ny baze ; laissez le courre : il bastit aussi bien sur le vuide que sur le plain, et de l'inanité que de matiere" (1027). This short discussion of reason in "Des Boyteux" constitutes a summary of the principal theme of the "Apologie," and accords with Montaigne's treatment of reason therein.

Montaigne gives an extensive description of his conception of reason in the "Apologie." The fact that he feels a need to define his understanding of the term is indication that he is quite aware that his viewpoint differs from common opinion. His description is consistent with his earliest definition in the first book of the *Essais*, presenting reason as a process, the internal discourse that takes place in the mind, fallible, whimsical, fabricator of opinion rather than truth, and sensitive to outside influences:

J'appelle tousjours raison cette apparence de discours que chacun forge en soy : cette raison, de la condition de laquelle il y en peut avoir cent contraires autour d'un mesme subject, c'est un instrument de plomb et de cire, alongeable, ployable, et accommodable à tous biais et à toutes mesures ; il ne reste que la suffisance de le sçavoir contourner. Quelque bon dessein qu'ait un juge, s'il ne s'escoute de prez, à quoy peu de gens s'amusent, l'inclination à l'amitié, à la parenté, à la beauté et à la vengeance, et non pas seulement choses si poissantes, mais cet instinct fortuite qui nous faict favoriser une chose plus qu'une autre, et qui nous donne, sans le congé de la raison, le chois en deux pareils subjects, ou quelque umbrage de pareille vanité, peuvent insinuer insensiblement en son jugement la recommandation ou deffaveur d'une cause et donner pente à la balance. (565)

Montaigne separates instinctive impulses from internal discourse, reason proper, yet attributes the conclusion of human deliberations in some cases to their influence. The instinct "fortuite" that Montaigne speaks of accounts for some of the randomness of the human reasoning process. Unclear is what sources of influence Montaigne means to include under the category of "quelque umbrage de pareille vanité," or how Montaigne can be aware of influences on human reason that act "insensiblement." The point, however, is the inconsistency of reason.

Adding to the inconsistency of human reason, and possibly another example of a force that “insensiblement” alters its flow, is the influence of the stars. Early in the “Apologie,” Montaigne places human internal discourse under the control of the stars; much as human reason is subservient to the intelligence and authority of God, it is also subservient to the reason of these celestial bodies:

...à considerer la domination et puissance que ces corps là ont, non seulement sur nos vies et conditions de nostre fortune [...] mais sur nos inclinations mesmes, nos discours, nos volonte, qu'ils regissent, poussent et agitent à la mercy de leurs influences, selon que nostre raison nous l'apprend et le trouve [...] à voir que non un homme seul, non un Roy, mais les monarchies, les empires et tout ce bas monde se meut en branle des moindres mouvements celestes [...] si nostre vertu, nos vices, nostre suffisance et science, et ce mesme discours que nous faisons de la force des astres, et cette comparaison d'eux à nous, elle vient, comme juge nostre raison, par leur moyen et de leur faveur [...] si nous tenons de la distribution du ciel cette part de raison que nous avons, comment nous pourra elle esgaler à luy ? (450-51)

Human reason is not directly under human control, at all, but attributable to celestial forces, the stars and God. If such is the case, the meanderings of human reason are destined to follow certain courses, although in ways unknowable to humans themselves, whose own knowledge of the forces that control their thoughts is under the control of those very forces. Humans are at the mercy of God and the natural laws he has established in their intellectual quests. It is no wonder, then, that philosophy fails to arrive at sure conclusions that all recognize as true. The variety of philosophical opinions on all matters is indication of the haphazard operations of human reason: “la Fortune mesme n'est pas plus diverse et variable que nostre raison, ny plus aveugle et inconsiderée” (Montaigne 516).

The fact that human reason wanders continually and is incapable of discovering truth by its own power, implies that all human internal discourse and mental activity, no matter its degree of deviation from reality and truth, are worthy of the appellation “reason.” Montaigne makes

this clear in the “Apologie”: “j’appelle raison nos resveries et nos songes, avec la dispense de la philosophie, qui dit le fol mesme et le meschant forcener par raison, mais que c’est une raison de particuliere forme” (523). In fact, due to the diversity of human reasoning that Montaigne describes, reason takes on endless forms. Melehy’s appraisal of Montaigne’s reason highlights its ever-changing form: “He finds reason an entirely free and unfixed instrument: not clear and distinct, but vague—wandering, according to the etymology. In vagabondage, reason searches for its proper conduct and movement, never finding its own realm, never identical to itself, continually disrupted by the singularity of its encounters” (WC 86). Not every form is practical, that is to say “reasonable,” and none of the forms is an expression of truth. The addition of God’s grace is necessary for truth to come from reasoning. With such an all-encompassing conception of reason in place, the inclusion of animal mental discourse under the domain of reason, implied by the resemblance of their behavior to human behavior, is clear. Animal reasoning may differ greatly from human reasoning since human reasoning itself is already exceedingly diverse.

Animals and Humans Share Reason

As in his treatment of language ability, Montaigne establishes the commonality of animal and human reasoning ability by means of human-animal comparisons. Rather than beginning with examples of animal behavior that closely parallel human acts attributable to reason from species closely resembling humans such as primates or even other mammals, Montaigne first cites the behavior of bees: “Est-il police plus réglée avec plus d’ordre, diversifiée à plus de charges et d’offices, et plus constamment entretenue que celle des mouches à miel ? Cette disposition d’actions et de vacations si ordonnée, la pouvons nous imaginer se

conduire sans discours et sans providence ?” (454-55). The “ordre,” “police,” evident in the workings of bees and the “discours” behind them are indications of reason for Montaigne. In fact, Montaigne perhaps begins with the example of bees to make a point about the nature of reason.

Today we would characterize the behavior of honey bees as instinctive, and few would consider the construction of hives and the production of honey to be the result of honey bee reasoning ability. Montaigne does not describe bee behavior as instinctive, but by numbering “providence” among its ingredients, Montaigne posits God as one of its causes. He also refers to an “inclination naturelle” later in his discussion of animal behavior that is analogous to instinct (455). Montaigne means to expand the domain of reason to indicate that actions like hive construction and human behavior commonly accepted as higher reasoning are in fact only facets of one ability, common to both humans and animals.

He buttresses the example of bees with other specialized animal behaviors, the nest construction of swallows and the web building of spiders. Montaigne presents these new examples in such a way that it becomes clear that a human undertaking similar endeavors would by necessity depend upon reasoning ability:

Les ardelles, que nous voyons au retour du printemps fureter tous les coins de nos maisons, cherchent elles sans jugement et choisissent elles sans discretion, de mille places, celle qui leur est la plus commode à se loger ? Et, en cette belle et admirable contexture de leurs bastimens, les oiseaux peuvent ils se servir plustost d’une figure quarrée que de la ronde, d’un angle obtus que d’un angle droit, sans en sçavoir les conditions et les effects ? Prennent-ils tantost de l’eau, tantost de l’argile, sans juger que la durezza s’amollit en l’humectant ? Planchent-ils de mousse leur palais, ou de duvet, sans prévoir que les membres tendres de leurs petits y seront plus mollement et plus à l’aise ? Se couvrent-ils du vent pluvieux, et plantent leur loge à l’Orient, sans connoistre les conditions differentes de ces vents et considerer que l’un leur est plus salutaire que l’autre ? Pourquoi espessit l’araignée sa toile en un endroit et relasche en un autre ? se sert à cette heure de cette sorte de neud, tantost de celle-là, si elle n’a et deliberation, et pensement, et conclusion ? (455)

The considerations that Montaigne describes are those that a human would necessarily need to be aware of to effect constructions with similar advantages. Humans show “discretion” when they build in a location that their “jugement” determines to be more advantageous than another. They have knowledge of the conditions that make a location and building materials preferable to others, and so it is reasonable to assume that swallows cannot construct their nests “sans connoistre” the advantages of their actions. Montaigne implies that specialized animal activities indicate “et deliberation, et pensement, et conclusion,” or logical thinking.

Montaigne, nonetheless, presents these considerations as questions for the animal. He asks, ‘Is it possible, that swallows construct their nests in such a fashion, and spiders their webs, without knowledge of the effects and advantages of what they do?’ If such were the case, we could conclude that animals do not reason as humans do, but Montaigne counters this objection in two ways.

Firstly, Montaigne asserts that it is more reasonable to conclude that animals do deliberate and take into consideration the effects of their behavior than to conclude that they do not. As in the case of the question of human superiority, Montaigne insinuates an absence of evidence, in this case, supporting the judgment that animal behavior is unreasoned: “Nous voyons toutesfois aux nostres [works], plus grossiers, les facultez que nous y employons, et que nostre ame s’y sert de toutes ses forces ; pourquoi n’en estimons nous autant d’eux ? pourquoi attribuons nous à je ne sçay quelle inclination naturelle et servile les ouvrages qui surpassent tout ce que nous pouvons par nature et par art ?” (455). Given an absence of evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to conclude that like effects spring from like cause, and not from instinct, the “inclination naturelle” Montaigne mentions: “Nous devons conclurre de pareils effects pareilles facultez” (460).

This argument by Montaigne is open to eventual rebuttal should evidence appear giving reason to support causes for animal behavior other than the deliberation and consideration Montaigne describes. This is why Montaigne's conception of reason, which includes both simple, specialized animal behavior and complex chains of logic is so important. If the reader accepts Montaigne's definition of reason, instinct and logic are merely varying degrees of the same faculty, Montaigne's argument for reason as a faculty humans and animals share remains valid whether or not their actions are the result of instinct.

The second way that Montaigne defends from attack his conclusion that such acts as the nest building of swallow and the web construction of spiders are the result of reason is by pointing out that refusing to ascribe these behaviors to reason does not confer superiority to humans, but rather assigns a faculty to animals that surpasses human reason and argues for the superiority of animals. Thierry Gontier explains Montaigne's two-pronged attack in these terms:

Le premier discours vise à réfuter le *caractère essentiel* des différences entre l'homme et l'animal...chaque avantage supposé propre à l'homme...est démontré commun à l'homme et à l'animal...L'autre type de discours vise à réfuter l'adversaire par une réduction à l'absurde, en montrant que chaque *avantage* attribué à l'homme...est en réalité une *faiblesse*. (50)

Gontier's remarks reveal the rhetorical use to which Montaigne puts his human-animal comparisons. Montaigne believes that by arguing for a "naturelle inclination," we imply nature's preference for animals, who has favored animals with gifts greater than humans':

En quoy, sans y penser, nous leur donnons un tres-grand avantage sur nous, de faire que nature, par une douceur maternelle, les accompagne et guide, comme par la main, à toutes les actions et commoditez de leur vie ; et qu'à nous elle nous abandonne au hazard et à la fortune, et à quester, par art, les choses nécessaires à nostre conservation ; et nous refuse quant et quant les moyens de pouvoir arriver, par aucune institution et contention d'esprit, à l'industrie naturelle des bestes : de maniere que leur stupidité brutale surpasse en toutes commoditez tout ce que peut nostre divine intelligence. (455)

Montaigne's use of "divine" to describe human intelligence is ironic, serving to heighten the absurdity of believing in the face of the evidence of animal behavior that lack of animal reasoning ability would be grounds for claims of human superiority. From Montaigne's chosen perspective, difference implies animal superiority, not human superiority, but it is a rhetorical perspective which Montaigne abandons to return to his theme of commonality and equality.

When Montaigne revisits animal reasoning, his examples no longer consist of instinctive behaviors like the nest building of swallows, an ability that Montaigne attributes to reason but that humans cannot duplicate. His aim is to bring out the common nature of humans and animals he shows that animals reason as humans do, but just prior to doing so, he reiterates that differences in reasoning ability would serve as proof of animal, rather than human superiority:

s'il est ainsi que luy seul, de tous les animaux, ait cette liberté de l'imagination et ce deresglement de pensées, luy représentant ce qui est, ce qui n'est pas, et ce qu'il veut, le faux et le veritable, c'est un avantage qui luy est bien cher vendu et duquel il a bien peu à se glorifier, car de là naist la source principale des maux qui le pressent : peché, maladie, irresolution, trouble, desespoir. (459-60)

Montaigne paints the use of human imagination and speculation as largely detrimental, and gives this as reason for animal superiority if only humans have these sorts of reasoning capabilities.

Our freedom of imagination is actually a "deresglement de pensées," implying that the imagination lacks the order that Montaigne often associates with reason. The imagination is an aspect of reason that detracts from human glory. He makes it clear that his previous argument for lack of human superiority based on unequal gifts from nature remains valid: "Il n'est pas en nostre puissance d'acquérir une plus belle recommandation que d'estre favorisé de Dieu et de nature" (460). Without reason, animals would be superior to humans because "il est plus honorable d'estre acheminé et obligé à réglément agir par naturelle et inevitable condition, et plus approchant de la divinité, que d'agir réglément par liberté temeraire et fortuite ; et plus seur

de laisser à nature qu'à nous les resnes de nostre conduite" (460). Godly order is superior to the "liberté temeraire et fortuite" of human imagination. As in the case of his earlier argument for animal superiority founded on a hypothetical difference between humans and animals, Montaigne abandons the position, attesting its falsehood.

His animal anecdotes now serve a different rhetorical purpose: proof of animal reasoning equivalent to human reason. To demonstrate animal reasoning abilities including imagination and deliberation, Montaigne rests on his assertion that "il n'y a point d'apparence d'estimer que les bestes facent par inclination naturelle et forcée les mesmes choses que nous faisons par nostre choix et industrie" (460). By employing animal anecdotes, Montaigne provides evidence of animals mimicking human behavior that would indicate reasoning, and coaxes the reader to accept his conclusion on animals "et confesser que par consequent que ce mesme discours, cette mesme voye, que nous tenons à ouvrir, c'est aussi celle des animaux" (460).

To begin his demonstration, Montaigne draws an animal story from Plutarch. Montaigne tells us that the ancient Thracians used a captive fox to decide the safest path for crossing a frozen river. The fox's ability to determine the relative safety of the ice is proof to Montaigne that the fox is capable of reasoning:

[Q]uand nous le verrions au bord de l'eau approcher son oreille bien pres de la glace, pour sentir s'il orra d'une longue ou d'une voisine distance bruyre l'eau courant au dessous, et selon qu'il trouve par là qu'il y a plus ou moins d'espeueur en la glace, se reculer ou s'avancer, n'aurions nous pas raison de juger qu'il luy passe par la teste ce mesme discours qu'il feroit en la nostre, et que c'est une ratiocination et consequence tirée du sens naturel : Ce qui fait bruit, se remue ; ce qui se remue, n'est pas gelé ; ce qui n'est pas gelé, est liquide, et ce qui est liquide, plie sous le faix ? (460)

Montaigne is quick to point out that the fox's keen hearing alone cannot account for his pathfinding proficiency: "Car d'attribuer cela seulement à une vivacité du sens de l'ouye, sans discours et sans consequence, c'est une chimere, et ne peut entrer en nostre imagination" (460).

It is true that hearing alone cannot account for the fox's ability, that some mental processing of these sound impressions are necessarily involved in the determination of the fox's behavior, but Montaigne has misrepresented the scene to some extent. His description already includes part of the fox's reasoning process, despite the fact that Montaigne has claimed earlier that humans are incapable of knowing the animal's inner world (452).

Montaigne tells us that the fox presses his ear to the ice in order to determine whether or not the water running below is relatively near or far, but all we can truly observe is the fox putting his ear to the ice. Whatever intentions or goals the animal might have, they are unknown to us. Montaigne proceeds to jump the reasoning step which connects the distance of the water to the thickness of the ice above, which we should note is not a necessary conclusion, to state that depending on the thickness of the ice, the fox retreats or advances. Again, the connection between the fox's presumed investigation and his movements is in reality hidden from our view: all that we really observe are the fox's movements. We observe the fox placing his ear along the ice, he subsequently backsteps or moves forward. As a result of our own reasoning, we can easily imagine the reasoning process of the fox as Montaigne outlines it as one possibility. This method of evaluating the fox's behavior correlates it to the behavior of humans in an analogous situation, "n'aurions nous pas raison de juger qu'il luy passe par la teste ce mesme discours qu'il feroit en la nostre," Montaigne asks (460). The reason Montaigne believes we should answer yes to this question, is that he has already stated that from like effect we should assume like cause without reason to do otherwise (460). So the real question is, do we have reason to assume otherwise?

Whether or not modern enquiries into animal behavior support or discredit rationality is one thing, but for Montaigne's contemporaries, providing evidence for a non-rational animal in

this case is difficult. They are without direct access to the animal's mental world, and the fox's actions are entirely analogous to a human's in a similar situation. Montaigne's opponent must either deny that from like effect we should assume like cause, and presumably provide a reason for this, or claim that both animals and humans do not necessarily use reasoning in these instances. The former is probably the preferable path, since the latter will open up a gray area of shared human-animal behavior. At some point a line will need to be drawn separating such behavior from human reasoning ability, which will be "true" reasoning ability.

As further example of animal reasoning ability in terms of consideration and deliberation, Montaigne offers animals' ability to self-medicate. Montaigne references stories of goats, tortoises, and dragons seeking out medicinal herbs to cure their ailments and asks, "Pourquoy disons nous que c'est à l'homme science et connoissance bastie par art et par discours, de discerner les choses utiles à son vivre et au secours de ses maladies, de celles qui ne le sont pas ; de connoistre la force de la rubarbe et du polipode ?" (462). As in prior arguments, Montaigne challenges his opponents to produce reasons to judge the cause of animal actions different from the cause of corresponding human activity. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, Montaigne believes one should assume like cause from like effect, and conclude that animals benefit from a reasoning faculty like in kind to human reason.

As in the case of animal language, Montaigne supports his own conclusions on animal reasoning with the opinion of an ancient Greek philosopher regarding another animal anecdote. The philosopher is Chrysippus, who Montaigne tells us is "autant desdaigneux juge de la condition des animaux que nul autre philosophe," and thus, presumably, is in no way biased in favor of animal reasoning (463). The anecdote involves a dog in search of his master, who upon arriving at an intersection investigates two of the possible routes for the scent of his master and

then immediately takes the third possibility to continue his search (Montaigne 463). Montaigne presents Chrysippus' interpretation of the dog's mental processes, beginning from the dog's point of view:

J'ay suivy jusques à ce carrefour mon maistre à la trace ; il faut necessairement qu'il passe par l'un de ces trois chemins ; ce n'est ny par cettuy-ci, ny par celuy-là ; il faut donc infailliblement qu'il passe par cet autre ; et que, s'assurant par cette conclusion et discours, il ne se sert plus de son sentiment au troisieme chemin, ny ne le sonde plus, ains s'y laisse emporter par la force de la raison. (463)

As in the case of Cleanthes' interpretation of ant behavior, Chrysippus' judgment supports Montaigne's argument for human and animal commonality. Chrysippus ascribes reasoning of the same order as human reasoning to account for the dog's action, as Montaigne remarks: "Ce traict purement dialecticien et cet usage de propositions divisées et conjointes et de la suffisante enumeration des parties, vaut il pas autant que le chien le sçache de soy que de Trapezonce" (463). The reasoning process which both animals and philosophers employ is the same, and of the same worth regardless of whether it is an ability that only humans enjoy or that both humans and animals share. Human and animal equality in this regard does not diminish the value of reason, only humans' perception of their own superiority. The purpose of demonstrating animal reasoning ability is to combat the belief in human superiority, as Raymond Esclapez remarks: "Car tous les témoignages de l'intelligence des animaux que Montaigne accumule convergent vers un seul but : contester le privilège de l'entendement qui aurait été octroyé à l'homme et ferait de lui le chef-d'œuvre de la création" (212). Montaigne accomplishes his goal by establishing a nature common to humans and animals, and demonstrating that reasoning ability is common to both is part of his procedure.

As in his discussion of animal language, Montaigne also uses arguments based on common experience and his own observations to establish animal reasoning. His first example is

the ability of certain birds to mimic human speech: “cette facilité que nous reconnoissons à nous fournir leur voix et haleine si souple et si maniable, pour la former et l’estreindre à certain nombre de lettres et de syllabes, tesmoigne qu’ils ont un discours au dedans, qui les rend ainsi disciplinables et volontaires à apprendre” (463). Montaigne makes a direct connection between learning and reasoning. If animals can learn, they reason. As an added example of animal learning, Montaigne cites the tricks humans teach to dogs (463). Both of his examples concern the learning of animals in the hands of human trainers. The advantage of these examples is that it is difficult for Montaigne’s opponents to deny that learning is taking place, since the dogs and birds in question are behaving in ways that they would not without the instruction of their trainer. The weakness of these examples is likewise that they involve unnatural animal behavior. Although animal learning in these cases is undeniable, an adversary might still counter that this is not learning in the same way as humans, since humans do not require instruction to learn, and certainly not from another species.

Montaigne deflates this possible argument with the evidence of dogs who lead the blind. He consistently states his preference for what is natural to that which is not, and so this is also the case with learnt dog behavior:

Chacun est soul, ce croy-je, de voir tant de sorte de cingeries que les bateleurs aprennent à leurs chiens [...] mais je remerque avec plus d’admiration cet effect, qui est toutes-fois assez vulgaire, des chiens dequoy se servent les aveugles, et aux champs et aux villes : je me suis pris garde comme ils s’arrestent à certaines portes d’où ils ont accoustumé de tirer l’aumosne, comme ils evitent le choc des coches et des charretes, lors mesme que pour leur regard ils ont assez de place pour leur passage ; j’en ay veu, le long d’un fossé de ville laisser un sentier plain et uni et en prendre un pire, pour esloigner son maistre du fossé. (463-64)

All of the behaviors Montaigne describes concern actions the dog takes that are of advantage to his master, and only indirectly to the dog itself. As such, they are unnatural behaviors that the dog must learn. What is truly remarkable for Montaigne about the behavior of these dogs and

sets them apart from the animal tricks he previously describes, is that the dog acts as it does without human instruction:

Commant pouvait on avoir faict concevoir à ce chien que c'estoit sa charge de regarder seulement à la seurté de son maistre et mespriser ses propres commoditez pour le servir ? et comment avoit il la cognoissance que tel chemin luy estoit bien assez large, qui ne le seroit pas pour un aveugle ? Tout cela se peut il comprendre sans ratiocination et sans discours ? (464)

The dogs that Montaigne describes differ from today's Seeing Eye dogs in that they do not receive training from humans in the performance of their tasks. The rhetorical questions that Montaigne poses imply that he finds the possibility of such training to be unlikely in any event. They highlight the fact that the dog decides of his own accord to serve his master, often to his own detriment, and learns to take care of his master without instruction. Animals are capable of learning, "cognoissance," without instruction, just as humans are. Learning of this sort indicates "ratiocination" and "discours," reasoning ability.

Likewise for the ability to teach. According to Montaigne, "Il y a encore plus de discours à instruire autrui qu'à estre instruit" (464). Animals share the ability to teach with humans and thus demonstrate a common reasoning capacity. Montaigne refers to Aristotle to make his point:

Aristote tient que les rossignols instruisent leurs petits à chanter, et y employent du temps et du soing, d'où il advient que ceux que nous nourrissons en cage, qui n'ont pas eu loisir d'aller à l'escole sous leurs parens, perdent beaucoup de la grace de leur chant. Nous pouvons juger par là qu'il reçoit de l'amendement par discipline et par estude. (464-65)

Montaigne follows the example of the nightingale with an anecdote from Arrius of musical elephants that practice and refine their performance, and Plutarch's story of a magpie that makes a study of the sound of trumpets in order to reproduce it (Montaigne 465). Animals instruct one another, modifying their own behavior just as humans do, another point in favor of a common

nature. To strengthen the parallel between animals and humans, Montaigne describes baby birds as if they were human children who go “à l’escole sous leurs parents.”

Like humans, animals also have the ability to instruct other species. Montaigne’s earlier examples demonstrate the human ability to teach animals, and he now offers Democritus’ opinion that human arts derive from animal abilities to show that animals teach humans:

“Democritus jugeoit et prouvoit , que la plus part des arts les bestes nous les ont apprises : comme l’araignée à tistre et à coudre, l’arondelle à bastir, le cigne et le rossignol la musique, et plusieurs animaux, par leur imitation, à faire la medecine” (464). All of the animal abilities Montaigne lists appear earlier in the “Apologie” except the swan and the nightingale, and the latter appears immediately after the statement in Montaigne’s discussion of Aristotle and the nightingale’s ability to teach its young to sing. The other arts appear in Montaigne’s earlier arguments for animal reasoning ability. To the proofs he provides there, he adds here the fact that animals instruct humans in these arts. As he states earlier, the ability to teach implies reasoning. The practice of these arts also implies reasoning, and although the argument remains unsaid, given the fact that animals are the originators of these arts, the human practice of them does not confer superiority to humans. It would be more reasonable to argue the contrary. Montaigne, however, is no longer attempting to counter human superiority with examples of animal behavior that testify to animal superiority. Having already stated his conclusion that humans and animals are of the same nature, what is most important to Montaigne now is the equality of humans and animals. Both learn, and both teach. These facts attest to a common nature.

To round out his discussion of classical examples of animal reasoning ability, Montaigne relates the example of dogs and crows adding stones to containers to raise the level of a liquid they are unable to reach with their mouths (465-66), before moving to a series of elephant

anecdotes. The elephant holds a privileged position among Montaigne's arguments for animal reasoning ability. Coming at the end of Montaigne's treatment of the subject, they serve as anchor for all that has gone before, for Montaigne believes that elephants, in particular, exhibit similarities to human nature: "Mais cet animal raporte en tant d'autres effects à l'humaine suffisance que, si je vouloy suivre par le menu ce que l'experience en a appris, je gaignerois aysément ce que je maintiens ordinairement, qu'il se trouve plus de difference de tel homme à tel homme que de tel animal à tel homme" (466). Montaigne provides several examples of elephant reasoning to make his point. The first is analogous to the dog and crow behavior that precedes it, as it involves the aid elephants provide to their comrades who have fallen in pits during the course of war, dropping stones and other objects in the pits in order that the fallen elephants have something to assist their climb out of the traps (Montaigne 466). The second involves an elephant who returns to his owner the feed he is given which exceeds the allotment he normally receives from his handler (Montaigne 466). Similarly, the last example included in his opening discussion of elephants is of an elephant who receives feed mixed with stones and who takes revenge upon his master by dropping ashes in his dinner.

Examining each of the three examples in question, a common thread appears. Each involves the influence of the passions over reason. In the case of the fellow elephants fallen in pits, the other elephants work together to help their comrade although they do not themselves directly profit from the endeavor. One possible implication is that the elephants carry aid to the victims of these traps out of compassion for their plight. Even if this is not the case, and the elephants help their fallen in order that the victims might climb from their pits to rejoin the battle, they still must be able to imagine the necessary means to escape, which might involve assuming the point of view of the other elephant. In either case, the elephants apply their

reasoning ability for the benefit of others, although they may indirectly benefit from its application.

The emotional content of the other two examples is much clearer. These examples follow directly Montaigne's assertion that there is "plus de difference de tel homme à tel homme que de tel animal à tel homme" (466), and the fact that Montaigne alludes to the thoughts of the elephant in the example that immediately follows the statement lends credence to the assumption that the passions' contribution to the elephant's reasoning is what draws it so close to human behavior. It is accustomed to his normal handler, who, unbeknownst to the creature, has been depriving him of half of the feed allotted by his owner. When the owner himself feeds the elephant, it looks upon him "de mauvais œil" (466), all the more, presumably, because the owner gives the animal his full allotment of feed, an inhabitual amount. Montaigne assumes the position of the elephant, imagining the suspicion he feels, and again takes his point of view when he assigns motive for the its action of returning that part of the feed which exceeds his normal allowance: "l'elephant [...] separa avec la trompe et en mit à part la moitié, declarant par là le tort qu'on luy faisoit" (466). The elephant removes the excess feed in protest against his new handler, one assumes, but the statement includes a wonderful ambiguity of which Montaigne was almost certainly aware. The elephant demonstrates to his owner the wrong he does in giving him twice his normal amount of feed, but at the same time perhaps demonstrates to the owner the wrong his normal handler has been doing the elephant, and the owner himself, in giving the elephant only half the feed he allots. Where the elephant demonstrates his close resemblance to humanity is in the way he demonstrates his passions by application of his reason, and in such a way that his reasoned action works contrary to his immediate benefit. The elephant refuses to

profit from the increased amount of fodder, the immediately practical course of action, preferring to demonstrate his emotional reaction to the owner.

The last of the three examples of elephant reasoning in Montaigne's opening paragraph on the subject includes no explanation of the elephant's thought processes. This is likely because the story is so similar to the one that precedes it. Following Montaigne's precept that from like effect one should assume like cause, the reader can assume that as in the case of the elephant who returns his feed to his owner, Montaigne attributes to spite the action of the elephant who dumps ash into the dinner of the master who uses stones to augment his feed. What is perhaps so human about the elephant's action is that it does not serve to directly rectify the problem of stones in its feed. Dumping ash into his master's pot has no direct benefit for the elephant. As in the case of the elephant who returns his feed, the elephant who deposits ash in his master's food applies his reason to demonstrate his emotional reaction to an injustice. The passions find expression with the aid of reason, and in this sense guide it. As Montaigne demonstrates the commonality of elephants and humans, he also challenges the preeminence of reason by demonstrating its corruptibility. Reason does not always serve practical ends, and it is not free from the influence of our passions.

Montaigne proves that animals reason as humans do with anecdotes that show animal imagination, deliberation, learning, and teaching. His elephant anecdotes show that the passions play a role in animal reasoning. The beginnings of a philosophy of animal nature are present in Montaigne's arguments for animal reasoning, but their primary purpose is to challenge the preeminence of reason and human superiority by establishing a nature common to both humans and animals. Animal reasoning need not be identical to human reasoning, as Melehy explains: "Montaigne is not here asserting the universality of knowledge, intelligence, and capacity to

proceed with purpose. Rather he is claiming a likeness...between human beings and animals that is knowable to human beings through the recognition that animals appear to have these faculties” (SA 273). Neither human nor animal reason are capable of truth, so there is no need to establish the effectiveness of animal discourse in this regard. Montaigne demonstrates that in the practical application of reason, animals compare favorably to humans. Although there are difference of “ordres” and “degrez,” animal reason and human reason are of the same nature.

If it were true that nature had endowed animals with a faculty lacking in humans, Montaigne believes that by every right, humans could consider nature unjust: “Vrayement, à ce compte, nous aurions bien raison de l’appeller une tres-injuste maratre. Mais il n’en est rien ; nostre police n’est pas si difforme et desreglée” (456). According to Hugo Friedrich, Montaigne plays with the concepts of *dignitas* and *miseria*, a popular undertaking at the time: “The fluctuation between *dignitas* and *miseria* was in general a favorite game of contrasts in popular literature of the sixteenth century, a fashionable material for argumentation where reaching a solution was no longer necessarily the point” (120). Thierry Gontier gives a detailed account of the history of this discourse and Montaigne’s place in it in the second chapter of his *De l’Homme à l’animal*, “La Misère sans grandeur de l’homme” (85-121).

Pierre Villey notes in his edition that “nostre police” in the quote above refers to “la police de l’univers,” but it is also possible that Montaigne refers specifically to human reason. Just prior to the reference, while Montaigne still adopts the perspective of those who deny animal reason, he speaks of humans as subject to the whims of fortune and chance in their quest for survival (455), and it is likely this state that he rejects when he claims “nostre police,” i.e. human reason, is not disorderly to the extent that humans are inferior to animals. Acknowledging that humans do to some extent depend upon their craft and invention to survive, and that they are

unable to match certain animal abilities, he denies that these facts mean that nature has abandoned them to chance. Human art is like to the art of swallows or spiders, but on a different scale, and is neither less ordered nor less structured than any other part of nature.

Equal Endowments for Humans and Animals

To found the equality of humans and animals, Montaigne needs to go beyond their commensurate reasoning abilities, therefore he examines the gifts that nature provides to each. Montaigne shifts to a global perspective of animal and human abilities and makes the following statement: “Nature a embrassé universellement toutes ses creatures ; et n’en est aucune qu’elle n’ait bien plainement fourny de tous moyens necessaires à la conservation de son estre” (456). Although humans and animals have different aptitudes, different abilities, and employ shared abilities in varying degrees, including reasoning abilities, nature has endowed both with everything necessary to their survival, equally. According to Marcel Conche an important facet of this equality is the difference that each being represents: “Chaque être vaut en tant qu’il est différent des autres et est précisément lui-même. Les créatures ne sont donc pas subordonnées les unes aux autres ; chacune est sa propre fin” (MP 13). So long as an animal or human is capable of looking after their survival, how they do so has no bearing on their worth.

Montaigne turns to the human condition at birth in comparison to animals to stress human-animal equality, denying claims that humans are less well-equipped than animals, referring again to the natural order that underlies the world: “ces plaintes là sont fauces, il y a en la police du monde une esgalité plus grande et une relation plus uniforme” (456). Montaigne again comes at the issue from two angles, demonstrating that humans are not so feeble as some would claim, and also that animals at birth exhibit similar weaknesses.

Montaigne states that both humans and animals have a natural ability to procure food: “Quant à l’usage du manger, il est en nous, comme en eux, naturel et sans instruction [...] Qui fait doute qu’un enfant, arrivé à la force de se nourrir, ne sçeut qu’ester sa nourriture ? Et la terre en produit et luy en offre assez pour sa nécessité” (457). Although humans and animals may have different diets, the Earth provides equally for their needs, and while these gifts may be seasonal in the case of humans, this is also true for animals. Montaigne uses the example of ants and other animals to make his point: “tesmoing les provisions que nous voyons faire aux fourmis et autres pour les saisons steriles de l’année” (457). The fruits of the earth meet the alimentary needs of animals and humans, without necessitating cultivation. Montaigne even posits the possibility that human agricultural efforts, “nostre artifice,” produce results inferior to those that the Earth provides without them:

Ces nations que nous venons de decouvrir si abondamment fournies de viande et de breuvage naturel, sans soing et sans façon, nous viennent d’apprendre que le pain n’est pas nostre seule nourriture, et que, sans labourage, nostre mere nature nous avoit munis à planté de tout ce qu’il nous falloit ; voire, comme il est vraysemblable, plus plainement et plus richement qu’elle ne fait à present que nous y avons meslé nostre artifice... (457)

The bottom line is again that nature has equally endowed humans and animals, since both have a natural ability to sustain themselves, and that the Earth provides food for both in equal measure.

Having demonstrated equal abilities in terms of natural abilities to endure weather and to feed, Montaigne moves to the issue of natural defenses. Montaigne takes a different approach when dealing with natural defenses, likely because in this domain humans would seem to be so overmatched by so many animals. Instead of stating straight off the equality of human and animal abilities, he notes that the natural defenses of humans are actually superior to those of most animals: “Quant aux armes, nous en avons plus de naturelles que la plus part des autres animaux, plus de divers mouvements de membres, et en tirons plus de service, naturellement et

sans leçon” (458). Of course, he acknowledges that other animals may have greater natural defenses (458), thus placing humans somewhere in the middle of the pack in terms of an absolute scale of defensive ability. Being neither the weakest nor strongest, humans in no way separate themselves from the pack. Montaigne cites animals who supplement their defenses to show that even in the use of artificial weapons and defenses, humans are not alone. Furthermore, Montaigne considers this behavior natural to both humans and animals, using the fact that animals share the ability as proof of his judgment:

Et l’industrie de fortifier le corps et le couvrir par moyens acquis, nous l’avons par un instinct et precepte naturel. Qu’il soit ainsi, l’elephant esguise et esmoult ses dents, desquelles il se sert à la guerre [...] Quand les taureaux vont au combat, ils respandent et jettent la poussiere à l’entour d’eux ; les sangliers affinent leurs deffences ; et l’ichneumon, quand il doit venir aux prises avec le crocodile, munit son corps, l’enduit et le crouste tout à l’entour de limon bien serré et bien pestry, comme d’une cuirasse. Pourquoi ne dirons nous qu’il est aussi naturel de nous armer de bois et de fer ? (458)

Thus in the case of natural defenses, Montaigne continues to stress commonality and equality as he has throughout his comparisons of humans and animals. On an absolute scale, some species may be more powerful or weaker than others, but relatively speaking humans and animals have the natural defenses necessary for their survival in equal measure. These natural defenses include the ability to use weapons, shields, and other supplementary devices. Montaigne means to show that human abilities in this regard may differ in scale to animal behaviors but not in kind, as his examples drawn from the animal world attest.

The comparisons of human and animal abilities on this point lead the reader to Montaigne’s ultimate conclusion about human nature relative to animal nature, which he now reveals:

J’ai dit tout ceci [about animal nature] pour maintenir cette ressemblance qu’il y a aux choses humaines, et pour nous ramener et joindre au nombre. Nous ne sommes ny au dessus, ny au dessous du reste : tout ce qui est sous le Ciel, dit le

sage, court une loy et fortune pareille [...] Il y a quelque difference, il y a des ordres et des degrez ; mais c'est sous le visage d'une mesme nature... (459)

Explicitly stating that animals and humans share a common nature, Montaigne effectively claims that humans are animals. Thierry Gontier notes the similarity to Sebond's position: "Certes, pour Sebond aussi, l'homme est principalement ce qui le distingue de l'animal, c'est à dire son intelligence et sa volonté, mais l'originalité de Sebond est de considérer *aussi* l'homme comme animal" (59). He also recognizes in Sebond "une philosophie de la *modestie*" (59) which parallels Montaigne's stated goals for the "Apologie."

Montaigne's human is, however, more modest than Sebond's. Sebond still places animals below humans; Montaigne insists on the equality of all creatures, divesting humanity of its supposed superiority. Montaigne again attributes the idea of human superiority to vain fantasy without evidence in the phenomenal world: "Celle [superiority] qu'il se donne par opinion et par fantasie n'a ny corps ny goust" (459). Friedrich summarizes Montaigne's comparisons between humans and animals: "The meaning is clear: man is removed from his special position and in equal rank with the animal is delivered up to a motherly order of nature" (122). The arguments for equal endowments from nature are a rhetorical device that serves Montaigne's skeptical goal of humbling humanity.

Sameness in Difference

Montaigne's comparisons of humans and animals lead him to believe that the two share a common nature. Prior to restating his conclusion to that effect, Montaigne equates opinions to the contrary with similar opinions about the nature of New World inhabitants:

J'ay veu autresfois parmy nous des hommes amenez par mer de lointain pays, desquels par ce que nous n'entendions aucunement le langage, et que leur façon, au demeurant, et leur contenance, et leurs vestemens estoient du tout esloignez

des nostres, qui de nous ne les estimoit et sauvages et brutes ? qui n'attribuoit à stupidité et à bestise de les voir muets, ignorans la langue Françoisse, ignorans nos baisemains et nos inclinations serpentées, nostre port et nostre maintien, sur lequel, sans faillir, doit prendre son patron la nature humaine ? (467)

The efficacy of the comparison lies in the possession of language by peoples of the New World, though the French do not understand it. Their appearance and behaviors differ from the French, but that they are nonetheless human, and thus, regardless of the assumptions of some, of the same nature as the French. Recognizing the similarity of the animal's situation, the reader is led to conclude that animals, too, are of a common nature with humans. Montaigne solidifies the connection between human opinions about Americans and animals by explaining its cause: "Tout ce que nous semble estrange, nous le condamnons, et ce que nous n'entendons pas : comme il nous advient au jugement que nous faisons des bestes" (467). Humans judge themselves superior to animals because they are strange and because they fail to understand them. The statement agrees with Montaigne's earlier assertions that ignorance is the source of human vanity. After a careful study of animals, Montaigne believes that a common nature for both animals and humans is the reasonable conclusion, but he at the same time acknowledges that animals are something humans do not understand.

The nature which humans and animals share must, therefore, be without clear definition. Montaigne is aware of the fact, and brings it to the reader's attention: "Elles [animals] ont plusieurs conditions qui se rapportent aux nostres : de celles-là par comparaison nous pouvons tirer quelque conjecture ; mais de ce qu'elles ont particulier, que savons nous que c'est ?" (467). Humans can arrive at certain conclusions about animal nature given the correspondences to human nature. One of these conclusions is that humans and animals share a common nature. But what humans cannot conclude is that since humans and animals share a nature, a certain animality, animals do not have any abilities that differ from humans'. Animal nature includes a

large variety of individual characteristics which not all animal species share. Melehy comments on this facet of the “Apologie”: “Through perceptions of animals such as those that Montaigne is presenting, it [human intelligence] may recognize that its view of nature is only one among many possible others, most of them completely inaccessible to it” (SA 272). Montaigne intends to show that not all of these characteristics are comprehensible to humans and that there is the possibility that among individual animal species many abilities exist that are unknown to humans.

To make his point, Montaigne revisits the case of elephants, remarking on the conjecture that humans can make regarding elephant religion:

Nous pouvons aussi dire que les elephans ont quelque participation de religion, d'autant qu'apres plusieurs ablutions et purifications on les void, haussant leur trompe comme des bras et tenant les yeux fichez vers le Soleil levant, se planter long temps en meditation et contemplation à certaines heures du jour, de leur propre inclination, sans instruction et sans precepte. Mais, pour ne voir aucune telle apparence és autres animaux, nous ne pouvons pourtant establir qu'ils soient sans religion, et ne pouvons prendre en aucune part ce qui nous est caché. (468)

That elephants have religion is already a speculative position, though a more reasonable conclusion in the sixteenth century than today, given the state of natural philosophy and the importance attributed to astrology, which Montaigne acknowledges earlier in the “Apologie.” Montaigne’s point, however, is not that humans can be certain that elephants have religion, but that humans can only speculate on evidence at hand. Elephant behavior presents humans with the possibility of concluding that they have religion, apparently a type of Sun worship, but it is not reasonable to conclude anything based on an absence of evidence. If other species show no evidence of religion, we cannot therefore conclude that they have no religion. The argument is similar to Montaigne’s line of reasoning regarding animal language. Jaume Casals Pons gives the following formula to describe Montaigne’s logic in the “Apologie”: “A est possible parce

que la raison démontre que la raison ne peut démontrer ni A ni non A” (189). The use of this line of reasoning contributes to Montaigne’s project of outlining the limits of human reason. We cannot argue from the fact that humans are incapable of understanding animals, that they have no language.

Montaigne treatment of Cleanthes’ conclusions about ant communication illustrate this point. Ant communication, taking place via an ability beyond human understanding and which humans do not share, begins a new area of examination for Montaigne. His primary concern to this point is to show the commonality and equality of humans and animals. Having established a common nature, Montaigne demonstrates the differences that exist between humans and animals. In particular, he highlights animal abilities that either surpass human abilities of like kind, or which humans do not share with animals, as he explains prior to his examples: “Or elles [animals] produisent encore d’autres effects qui surpassent de bien loin nostre capacité, ausquelles il s’en faut tant que nous puissions arriver par imitation que, par imagination mesme, nous ne les pouvons concevoir” (468). The purpose of his demonstration is to underscore human ignorance with regards to the exact nature of individual animal species, and therefore animal nature. The point being that humans judge animals and use them to determine the relative position of humans in the universe without ample evidence to make reasonable conclusions on the subject. As in the case of the denial of animal language, “nous entremettons à cette cause sottement d’en opiner” (468).

The first animal that Montaigne examines is that which the ancient Romans referred to as the remora. Montaigne describes the animal as a “poisson à coquille” (469), and so the barnacle is likely the animal to which the word refers. Its importance lies in its ability to “arrester toute sorte de vaisseaux ausquels il s’attache” (468). This ability does not correspond to any human

ability, and, moreover, it is an ability that Montaigne believes transcends human comprehension.

He signals this belief by relating the reaction of Caligula to the animal's ability:

Et l'empereur Caligula voguant avec une grande flotte en la coste de la Romainie, sa seule galere fut arresté tout court par ce mesme poisson, lequel il fist prendre attaché comme il estoit au bas de son vaisseau, tout despit dequoy un si petit animal pouver forcer et la mer et les vents et la violence de tous ses avirons, pour estre seulement attaché par le bec à sa galere [...] et s'estonna encore, non sans grande raison, de ce que, luy estant apporté dans le bateau, il n'avoit plus cette force qu'il avoit au dehors. (468-69)

Montaigne shares the marvel Caligula expresses at the animal's ability, as well as the wonder in the face of Caligula's inability to understand the discrepancy between its force above and below water which Montaigne finds "non sans grande raison." The inability of humans to match the remora's ability or even to understand it, confirms Montaigne's assertion that the exact nature of animals is unknown to humans, and differs from human nature in the details despite the commonality that exists among all species, including humans. Montaigne strengthens his position by adding examples of other species with special abilities that humans do not share, including the ability of the hedgehog to predict the direction of the wind, and the color-changing abilities of the chameleon and the octopus.

Montaigne's discussion of color-changing includes a discussion of a similar human ability. By pointing out differences and similarities in the color-changing abilities of chameleons, octopuses and humans, he provides a clear example of a shared ability that points to a common nature but which differs in its execution and function:

Le cameleon prend la couleur du lieu où il est assis ; mais le poulpe se donne luy-mesme la couleur qu'il luy plaist, selon les occasions, pour se cacher de ce qu'il craint et attraper ce qu'il cherche : au cameleon, c'est changement de passion ; mais au poulpe, c'est changement d'action. Nous avons quelques mutations de couleur à la fraieur, la cholere, la honte et autres passions qui alterent le teint de nostre visage, mais c'est par l'effect de la souffrance comme au cameleon : il est bien en la jaunisse de nous faire jaunir, mais il n'est pas en la disposition de nostre volonté. (469)

Although the chameleon's ability to change color is not identical to the corresponding human ability, both are the result of a reaction to their environment, understood in its widest sense, and neither humans nor chameleons are able to use the ability by the force of their own will. The octopus supports Montaigne's point about animal abilities that are outside of human understanding, and adds the extra nuance, by way of contrast with the chameleon, of differences between animal species' abilities in degree and kind. Montaigne is implying an understanding of the animal world in which each species, including humans, shares in one common nature that one might refer to as animality, while maintaining its specificity whose essence is undefinable.

Divination by means of studying the flight of birds is Montaigne's next topic. Rather than considering such divination as a human ability, Montaigne again adopts the perspective of the animal and imagines the ability the birds must possess for divination from their flight to be possible:

De toutes les predictions du temps passé, les plus anciennes et plus certaines estoient celles qui se tiroient du vol des oiseaux. Nous n'avons rien de pareil et si admirable. Cette regle, cet ordre du bransler de leur aile par lequel on tire des consequences des choses à venir, il faut bien qu'il soit conduit par quelque excellent moyen à une si noble operation : car c'est prester à la lettre d'aller attribuant ce grand effect à quelque ordonnance naturelle, sans l'intelligence, consentement et discours de qui le produit ; et est une opinion evidemment faulse. (469)

As in the case of the swallows' nest-building and the web construction of spiders, the flight of birds in accordance with the auguries they provide, by their ordered nature imply reasoned action on the part of the birds. Rather than an "ordonnance naturelle" or instinct, divination from the flight of birds is evidence of "intelligence, consentement et discours," or animal reasoning, and more to the point here, of an animal ability that humans do not share and whose mechanism lies hidden from human perception. As proof that birds are aware of their divinatory properties and

make use of them, Montaigne cites their migration patterns: “Les gruës, les arondelles et autres oiseaux passagers, changeans de demeure selon les saisons de l’an, montrent assez la connoissance qu’elles ont de leur faculté divinatrice, et la mettent en usage” (469-70).

Montaigne is arguing against ingrained, instinctive behavior devoid of reason, and for the internal discourse that humans hold as a privileged ability. As in the case of the color-changing abilities of octopuses, the divinatory quality of bird flight is an indication of both animal similarity and animal difference.

Montaigne offers two more examples of animal cognizance and exploitation of special abilities. One, as in the case of the flight of birds, involves divination. As is his practice, Montaigne takes the perspective of the animal, overlooking the use that humans make of the animal’s ability to concentrate on the ability of an animal, in this case a dog, that humans cannot match:

Les chasseurs nous assurent que, pour choisir d’un nombre de petits chiens celui qu’on doit conserver pour le meilleur, il ne faut que mettre la mere au propre de le choisir elle mesme : comme, si on les emporte hors de leur giste, le premier qu’elle y rapportera, sera tousjours le meilleur ; ou bien, si on faict semblant d’entourner de feu leur giste de toutes parts, celui des petits au secours duquel elle courra premierement. Par où il appert qu’elles ont un usage de prognostique que nous n’avons pas, ou qu’elles ont quelque vertu à juger de leurs petits, autre et plus vive que la nostre. (470)

The mother of the pups is not only capable of judging their relative merit, but also employs this knowledge to protect the choice of her litter. For Montaigne, the mother’s actions imply cognizance of her ability.

The behavior of the electric ray more clearly exemplifies cognizance of a special ability. Montaigne apparently realizes this, and places the electric ray after his discussion of divination by bird flight in support of his assertion that reason guides birds’ flight:

Qu'il soit ainsi : la torpille a cette condition, non seulement d'endormir les membres qui la touchent, mais au travers des filets et de la scene elle transmet une pesanteur endormie aux mains de ceux qui la remuent et manient ; voire dit-on d'avantage que si on verse de l'eau dessus, on sent cette passion qui gagne contremont jusques à la main et endort l'atouchement au travers de l'eau. Cette force est merveilleuse, mais elle n'est pas inutile à la torpille : elle la sent et s'en sert, de maniere que, pour attraper la proie qu'elle queste, on la void se tapir sous le limon, afin que les autres poissons se coulans par dessus, frappent et endormis de cette sienne froideur, tombent en sa puissance. (469)

The ray is conscious of its ability to transmit an electric shock across water, the proof being that it makes use of this ability to hunt. Montaigne uses this fact in support of the idea that animals have abilities which humans do not share and which are under the animal's control, whether octopuses, birds, rays, etc. The importance of this point is that it places these abilities on a par with human abilities that individual animal species might not share, as reason guides the use of both. Thus one can conclude that uniquely human abilities, if such exist, are not reasonable grounds for claims of human superiority.

For his argument to be effective, Montaigne must assume the position of the animal and imagine its thought processes. The efficacy of this method rests on the acceptance of Montaigne's precept 'from like effects one must assume like cause when there is no evidence to assume otherwise.' Montaigne assumes logic and discourse based on the actions of the ray and their results. He claims that the electric ray feels, "sent," the force of its ability, and that it uses the ability with intent. Montaigne's understanding of the ray's perspective is dependent upon his understanding of human nature. He derives the cause for the ray's actions from his assumptions about similar human behavior. If a human were to bury himself in the sand and shock fish with an electricity-generating ability and then proceed to eat the helpless victims, one would generally assume that the human covers himself with sand with the foreknowledge that this would hide him from passing fish who might avoid him otherwise. One would assume that the human hides

in order to shock the passing fish, and shocks the passing fish in order to eat them. Every action implies foreknowledge of cause and effect, along with intent and expectation. Without evidence to the contrary, Montaigne assumes the same intent and foreknowledge on the part of the ray.²

For Montaigne, his assumptions must seem secure. The opinions of ancient philosophers and natural historians, whom he cites frequently, and his own experiences agree with his conclusions. That future investigation might provide evidence that contradicts his conclusions must appear highly unlikely, for Montaigne believes that the order of nature is stable and unchanging. Classical sources are no more authoritative than common experience, since both stem from the same natural order. Montaigne states this clearly as he explains his inclusion of so many ancient sources in his animal anecdotes:

Nous admirons et poisons mieux les choses estrangeres que les ordinaires ; et sans cela, je ne me fusse pas amusé à ce long registre : car selon mon opinion, qui contrerollera de pres ce que nous voyons ordinairement des animaux qui vivent parmy nous, il y a dequoy y trouver des effects autant admirables que ceux qu'on va recueillant és pays et siecles estrangers. C'est une mesme nature qui roule son cours. Qui en auroit suffisamment jugé le present estat, en pourroit seurement conclurre et tout l'advenir et tout le passé. (467)

From the present state of nature, one can conclude “seurement” about its past and future. For this reason, Montaigne can conclude that animals reason as humans do, although to varying degrees. The evidence from which one can arrive at one’s conclusions has been and will

² Montaigne’s assumptions about reasoning ability when describing animal behavior depend on knowledge he cannot have. This fact is blatant when he treats special animal abilities. He no longer specifically treats the reasoning ability of animals as he does earlier in the “Apologie,” and therefore no longer details the reasoning process behind the behaviors he describes as he did earlier. When describing the behavior of the Thracian fox, for example, he imagines the fox’s logic step by step and challenges his readers to provide reasons why his explanation would be false. In all cases, he is dependent on a human perspective to reach an understanding of animal behavior. When Montaigne claims that we must assume like cause from like effect when considering animal behavior, he is effectively saying that humans can only understand animals from a human perspective; beyond that perspective animals are inscrutable. Montaigne’s definition of animal nature must be incomplete.

continue to be as it is in the present. What Montaigne fails to foresee is the possibility that technological advances might change the way in which humans perceive the evidence of nature.

The evidence of certain species, such as the electric rays, point to special abilities beyond the power of humans to duplicate or explain. The fact that these abilities exist suggests to Montaigne the possibility that certain species have other abilities for which no evidence is apparent to human perception: “Or ces effects que nous reconnoissons aux autres animaux, plus grands que les nostres, tesmoignent en eux quelque faculté plus excellente qui nous est occulte, comme il est vray-semblable que sont plusieurs autres de leurs conditions et puissances desquelles nulles apparences ne viennent jusques à nous” (469). All these instances of special animal abilities, however, are unique cases and fail to contradict the evidence of human and animal behavior on the whole, which leads Montaigne to the conclusion that both are the result of a common nature. In fact, concluding a separate human nature superior to that of animals from this evidence can only be unreasonable: “La maniere de naistre, d’engendrer, nourrir, agir, mouvoir, vivre et mourir des bestes estant si voisine de la nostre, tout ce que nous retranchons de leurs causes motrices et que nous adjoustons à nostre condition au dessus de la leur, cela ne peut aucunement partir du discours de nostre raison” (470). Montaigne exposes the special abilities of animals, and integrates them into his evidence for a nature common to both humans and animals by tying them to reason. Both humans and animals reason, with differences only in degree and application. These degrees of difference account for the variation in human and animal abilities.

Humans, Animals, and the Imagination

Montaigne begins his examination of the imagination with a reminder of the purpose of his comparisons between humans and animals. The introduction serves to define imagination as the ability to hold abstract images in the mind, and place it among the examples of abilities shared by humans and animals, which in turn indicates a nature common to the two:

Pour suivre encore un peu plus loing cette esqualité et correspondance de nous aux bestes, le privilege dequoy nostre ame se glorifie, de ramener à sa condition tout ce qu'elle conçoit, de despouiller de qualitez mortelles et corporelles tout ce qui vient à elle, de renger les choses qu'elle estime dignes de son accointance à desvestir et despouiller leurs conditions corruptibles, et leur faire laisser à part, comme vestemens superflus et viles, l'espaisseur, la longueur, la profondeur, le poids, la couleur, l'odeur, l'aspreté, la pollisseure, la dureté, la mollesse et tous accidents sensibles, pour les accomoder à sa condition immortelle et spirituelle, de maniere que Rome et Paris que j'ay en l'ame, Paris que j'imagine, je l'imagine et le comprends sans grandeur et sans lieu, sans pierre, sans plastre et sans bois ; ce mesme privilege, dis-je, semble estre bien evidamment aux bestes... (481)

Montaigne's description of the mental images one maintains in the mind implies an understanding of the essence of things. Describing this understanding as "spirituelle et immortelle" recalls Plato's ideas, and it is perhaps for this reason that Montaigne gives two concrete examples which fail to agree with Plato's definition of ideas. All doubt as to the equality of Montaigne's imagination and Plato's ideas disappears when Montaigne lists the ideas as a dubious theory later in the "Apologie."³ The exact nature of the mental abstractions is not the issue for Montaigne, but rather the fact that there is evidence that animals share in them.

Montaigne states earlier that the inner workings of the animal mind are invisible to humans, but he also states that it is reasonable to assume like cause from like effect unless there is reason to do otherwise. The fact that humans do not have direct access to the animal mind accounts for Montaigne's "semble estre" in the quote above. Likewise, his precept of arguing

³ "Je ne me persuade pas aysement qu'Epicurus, Platon et Pythagoras nous ayent donné pour argent contant leurs Atomes, leurs Idées et leurs Nombres. Ils estoient trop sages pour establir leurs articles de foy de chose si incertaine et si debatable" (511).

like cause from like effect accounts for the “bien evidamment.” The effect which indicates animal abstract imagination to Montaigne is the behavior animals exhibit while sleeping: “car un cheval accoustumé aux trompettes, aux harquebusades et aux combats, que nous voyons tremousser et fremir en dormant, estendu sur sa litiere, comme s’il estoit en la meslée, il est certain qu’il conçoit en son ame un son de tabourin sans bruict, une armée sans armes et sans corps” (481). Montaigne expresses absolute certainty not only about the fact that the horse dreams, but also as to the dream’s content. Montaigne gives two more examples of animals dreaming, more mundane, and in both cases dogs. As with the horse, Montaigne also provides the subject of the animals’ dream. In this case, remarking on the correspondance between their bodily movements and the dream’s content more explicitly, thus making his suppositions more plausible:

Ce lievre qu’un levrier imagine en songe, apres lequel nous le voyons haleter en dormant, alonger la queue, secouer les jarrets et representer parfaitement les mouvemens de sa course, c’est un lievre sans poil et sans os [...] Les chiens de gardes que nous voyons souvent gronder en songeant, et puis japper tout à faict et s’esveiller en sursaut, comme s’ils appercevoient quelque estranger arriver : cet estranger que leur ame void, c’est un homme spirituel et imperceptible, sans dimension, sans couleur et sans estre... (482)

Each of the examples Montaigne provides have antecedents in Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, and the corresponding Latin quotations accompany Montaigne’s French interpretations. Support from classical sources may account for the certainty of Montaigne’s belief in animal imagination. His belief allows him to place abstract imagination alongside other behaviors common to both humans and animals as proof of their equality and commonality.

Humans, Animals, Sex, and Desire

Procreation is the first commonality Montaigne treats: it plays a part in an interesting digression in which Montaigne departs from his rhetorical use of animals for skeptical purposes to take up the Epicurean theme of animals as examples for humans to follow. Humans and animals are of the same nature, but animals more closely follow their guiding nature than humans. For Montaigne, following as closely as possible the guiding force of nature is to one's benefit, and so animals are fitting models for proper human behavior. Montaigne cites the opinion of doctors to this effect before proceeding to his discussion of procreation: "Pour reglement de nostre santé, les medecins nous proposent l'exemple du vivre des bestes et leur façon," which he supplements with a popular adage: "*Tenez chauts les pieds et la teste ;/ Au demeurant, vivez en beste*" (470). Montaigne's discussion of procreation supports his assertions that animals follow more closely the natural order than humans, the proof lying in the benefit of their behavior:

La generation est la principale des actions naturelles : nous avons quelque disposition de membres qui nous est plus propre à cela ; toutesfois ils [doctors] nous ordonnent de nous ranger à l'assiete et disposition brutale, comme plus effectuelle [...] Et rejettent comme nuisibles ces mouvements indiscrets et insolents que les femmes y ont meslé de leur creu, les ramenant à l'exemple et usage des bestes de leur sexe, plus modeste et rassis... (470)

Montaigne underscores the importance of his example by making procreation "la principale" of natural actions. He acknowledges that the layout of the human skeleton predisposes humans to face-to-face sexual encounters, which might lead one to believe that face-to-face procreation is the more natural course of action for humans, but the efficacy of procreation in the animal position is the reason that humans should adopt it. Evidently, the profit of a given behavior is indication of its adhesion to the natural order.

Montaigne places the invention of women during love-making in contrast to the beneficial sex positioning of animals. Unlike procreation among animal species, the human

behavior Montaigne highlights is a product of the human imagination that women add unnecessarily to the natural act of procreation. That the superfluous movements are “nuisibles” is evidence that they are unnatural. Supplements to the procreative act are an example of how human reason, human internal discourse and imagination, turn humanity from the path of nature, largely to their detriment. Montaigne comments on this phenomenon by addressing human desires. He divides desire into three varieties: “Les cupiditez sont ou naturelles et necessaires, comme le boire et le manger ; ou naturelles et non necessaires, comme l’accointance des femelles ; ou elles ne sont ny naturelles ny necessaires : de cette derniere sorte sont quasi toutes celles des hommes ; elles sont toutes superfluës et artificielles” (471). There are no artificial desires that are necessary, but this fact does not entail that they are detrimental. Nonetheless, these artificial desires are dangerous because they interfere with natural desires: “Ces cupiditez estrangeres, que l’ignorance du bien et une fauce opinion ont coulées en nous, sont en si grand nombre qu’elles chassent presque toutes les naturelles” (472). Perhaps because of human ignorance, and the human tendency to engage in vain imagination, animals provide a model of simplicity to follow. Montaigne seemingly admits that animal reasoning does not allow for the same level of imagination and convoluted discourse seen in human reasoning by placing animal behavior closer to the natural order underlying the universe: “Les animaux sont beaucoup plus reglez que nous ne sommes, et se contiennent avec plus de moderation sous les limites que nature nous a prescripts” (472). Neither humans nor animals exceed the limits nature prescribes, but animals keep more narrowly to the middle path. Montaigne preaches moderation, which involves contenting oneself with what is natural and necessary as much as possible, while avoiding what is artificial and unnecessary.

Natural Versus Artificial in Montaigne

For Montaigne's argumentation to hold together, the reader must understand his use of nature in two ways. In one sense, everything that takes place is natural. Earlier in the "Apologie," Montaigne attributes the human use of weapons and shields to a natural instinct. For Montaigne, weapons and shields are not artificial in the same way that supplements to love-making are, for instance. Naturalness does not stem from necessity, since Montaigne acknowledges that some desires are both natural and unnecessary. Weapons and shields probably fall into this latter category. In his discussion of clothing, Montaigne expresses his opinion that clothing is not necessary to human survival, but he never claims that it is unnatural. What separates innovations to love-making and the use of iron weapons to defend oneself is the degree of imagination involved in its invention. Both involve the application of our reason, but our reason often goes astray as a result of human "ignorance du bien" and leads to "une fauce opinion" that is ultimately detrimental to human well-being (Montaigne 472).

In the case of women's innovations to love-making, the movements are often detrimental to procreation. When he claims that animals are "plus reglez," he means to say by nature. In the application of their reason, animals tend not to stray so far from the general order of things as humans, and thus they are more likely to maintain their well-being. Both must stay within their natural limits, but humans meander closer to the poles, thus putting their well-being in danger. The closer one approaches the limits of nature as a result of one's discourse and imagination, the more likely it is that one engages in behavior Montaigne deems artificial. Donald M. Frame explains this account of nature versus art in the *Essais*:

Montaigne's notion of what is nature and what is art in man underwent little change. There seem to be two main tests: whatever is found in other living creatures is natural; whatever makes for our happiness is natural. In a sense, the two criteria are one, for all creatures naturally seek happiness. In man Montaigne

generally regards as natural the body, the necessary appetites and emotions, common sense and judgment. Generally unnatural, and always subject to unnatural use, are such dubious prerogatives as imagination and unbridled reasoning and their offspring ambition, presumption, avarice, insatiability, worry, and apprehension. Man even at his best is ignorant and frail, full of natural inclinations that cannot always be forced by will and reason. Art refuses to recognize our human condition; nature, wisely, knows us for what we are and makes the most of it. (96)

Montaigne's discussion of nature and art in "Des Cannibales" bears out this interpretation. He writes, "Ce n'est pas raison que l'art gaigne le point d'honneur sur nostre grande et puissante mere nature. Nous avons tant rechargé la beauté et richesse de ses ouvrages par nos inventions, que nous l'avons du tout estouffée" (205-06). When human invention supplements nature, the results pale before its purity: "par tout où sa pureté reluit, elle fait une merveilleuse honte à nos vaines et frivoles entreprises" (206).

The weakness of Montaigne's use of natural and artificial in this way, is not just that he uses natural now one way and later another,⁴ but that the division between the artificial and natural, when he uses the latter in its more restrictive sense, is vague. Artificial behavior becomes a subjective phenomenon, since nowhere does Montaigne state that artificial behaviors are all detrimental to human well-being. In the case of women's extraneous movements during love-making, this is the case, since these movements impede procreation, but Montaigne uses a number of other examples of animal behavior that he considers artificial which are not detrimental in themselves to well-being. Montaigne does not give these examples to clarify artificial behavior at all, but rather to demonstrate that even in the fact of deviating from the order of nature, humans are not unique.

⁴ For an example of Montaigne defining what is natural according to its broader sense see "D'Un Enfant monstrueux" where he attributes monstrosity to an error in human judgment that confuses what is novel with what is unnatural and then asserts that nothing in nature is contrary to nature: "Nous apelons contre nature ce qui advient contre la coustume : rien n'est que selon elle, quel qu'il soit" (713).

Procreation and love are at the center of the commonalities, whether natural or artificial, that Montaigne discusses. He notes that both humans and animals are capable of affection: “Il y a certaines inclinations d’affection qui naissent quelquefois en nous sans le conseil de la raison, qui viennent d’une temerité fortuite que d’autres nomment sympathie : les bestes en sont capable comme nous” (471). Likewise, animals share in our practice of selecting mates: “Les animaux ont choix comme nous en leurs amours et font quelque triage de leurs femelles.” (471) Since reason does not play a part in the affection Montaigne cites, it is safe to assume that he considers it natural. The selection of mates, on the other hand, is probably open to interpretation, being either natural or artificial depending on the kind of reasoning by which the animal arrives at its selection. Animals are also capable of “jalousies et d’envies extremes et irreconciliables” (471), just as humans, behavior, like the selection of mates, whose classification depends upon individual circumstances.

More clearly on the side of unnatural behavior are inter-specific sexual relationships. This kind of behavior is the first evidence Montaigne gives after acknowledging the existence of animal deviance from natural norms:

Les animaux sont beaucoup plus reglez que nous ne sommes [...] mais non pas si exactement qu’ils n’ayent encore quelque convenance à nostre desbauche. Et tout ainsi comme il s’est trouvé des desirs furieux qui ont poussé les hommes à l’amour des bestes, elles se trouvent aussi par fois esprises de nostre amour et reçoivent des affections monstrueuses d’une espèce à autre... (472)

To support his claim, Montaigne relates four stories drawn from classical sources: An elephant smitten by a young girl and who brings her fruits from the market and gropes her breasts with his trunk, a dragon taken with another young girl, and a goose with yet another, and finally, a ram in love with a young minstrel girl. To these examples, Montaigne adds the contemporary example of monkeys who lust after women, which he claims “se void tous les jours” (472). All of these

stories are examples of the “affections monstrueuses d’une espèce à autre,” specifically, the love of animals for humans, in each case, in fact, the love of male animals for women. The sexual attraction the animals exhibit is a deviation from nature in its restricted sense, likewise the “desirs furieux” that drive humans to the love of animals. Interspecific sexual relationships are an example of unnatural behavior that humans and animals share, pointing to the common nature of the two.

Following his discussion of interspecific sexual relationships, Montaigne moves to sexual relationships between males of the same species: “On void aussi certains animaux s’adonner à l’amour des masles de leur sexe” (472). Based on its placement in the text, homosexual relations may too be examples of unnatural animal behavior, or the fact that animals engage in homosexuality may be indication of its naturalness. Montaigne makes no connection between homosexuality and monstrosity, and what remains unsaid is that humans engage in homosexual behavior, as well. Homosexuality is a behavior that humans and animals share, a mark of their commonality. Incest is the same: “Oppianus et autres recitent quelques exemples pour monstrier la reverence que les bestes en leurs mariages portent à la parenté, mais l’experience nous faict bien souvent voir le contraire” (472). Montaigne follows this remark with a quotation from Ovid invoking cases of animal incest. Again, Montaigne does not explicitly state that incest is a human behavior, too, and therefore sign of commonality, but this is the point of the example. Animals and humans participate in similar sexual behavior, whether they deviate from the flow of nature or not.

Humans, Animals, Virtue and Vice

Montaigne also demonstrates the commonality of human and animals vices and virtues, beginning with the “subtilité malicieuse” of the mule of the philosopher Thales. The example of the mule is the first of several treating vices common to animals and humans. Besides malicious cunning, Montaigne notes the fact that animals often hoard items that are of no use to them, giving reason to believe that they, too, know greed: “Il y en a plusieurs [animals] qui representent naïvement le visage de nostre avarice, car on leur void un soin extreme de surprendre tout ce qu’elles peuvent et de le curieusement cacher, quoy qu’elles n’en tirent point d’usage” (473). The last in the series of examples is war. Montaigne cites the example of battling hordes of bees as evidence that animals, too, wage war. Given that these examples of common vices follow Montaigne’s discussion of unnatural sexual practices, one might conclude that these vices, too, are examples of deviancies from nature common to humans and animals. Montaigne’s digression from his comparison of human and animal abilities to discuss the folly of war, is another indication that the vices of animals and humans Montaigne highlights are unnatural. Montaigne attributes war to the “âme” and to the “appetits,” while comparing the motives that move the rulers of nations and the common man to violent action:

Les ames des Empereurs et des savatiers sont jettées à mesme moule.
Considerant l’importance des actions des princes et leur pois, nous nous persuadons qu’elles soyent produites par quelques causes aussi poissantes et importantes: nous nous trompons : ils sont menez et ramenez en leurs mouvemens par les mesmes ressorts que nous sommes aux nostres. La mesme raison qui nous fait tanser avec un voisin, dresse entre les princes une guerre ; la mesme raison qui nous faict foïter un lacquais, tombant en un Roy, luy fait ruiner une province. Ils veulent aussi legierement que nous, mais ils peuvent plus. Pareils appetits agitent un ciron et un elephant. (476)

Returning to animals to make a point about human nature is apt, as Montaigne’s comparison might as easily apply to humans and animals as to kings and commoners. If vices such as war and greed are attributable to the soul and appetites, then it is possible that they constitute

unnatural behavior. Montaigne never states that they are, but if they are, one can wonder if it is not also because they are vices that they are unnatural. Montaigne conceives of a natural order that is beneficial to the well-being of animals and humans, as shown above. It follows that engaging in deleterious behavior is unnatural.

Making the determination of Montaigne's attitude more difficult is that he jumps straight from common vices to common virtues. The possible connection is that he contrasts the first animal virtue he considers, loyalty, with the human vice of treachery: "Quant à la fidélité, il n'est animal au monde traistre au pris de l'homme" (476). All of Montaigne's examples are of dogs, who by virtue of their loyalty, bring the treachery of humans to light. The first two involve dogs who signal their master's murderers to justice, demonstrating their loyalty to a master who is no more. The last example is of a temple guard dog who follows a thief, apparently for days, until he is captured, showing his loyalty to his duties. As in Montaigne's examples of human vices, the fact that humans, though often treacherous, are capable of similar behavior is tacitly understood.

Montaigne recounts the tale of Androdus and the lion in some detail (477-78) to show that gratitude is common to animals and humans. The story also contains a fortuitous, one assumes, link to Montaigne's edict that it serves one's well-being to follow the course of nature, as animals tend to do. Androdus lives with the lion in the wilderness for three years and no harm befalls him, but he tires of "cette vie brutale et sauvage" and leaves the lion (478). Once he rejoins the lion, Androdus is always in its company. The story underscores the benefit of following the example of animals and conforming one's life as much as possible to the natural order. It also demonstrates interspecific friendship and loyalty.

Commonality is the recurring message, and the examples Montaigne now treats all come from the domain of social and emotional behavior. Humans mourn the death of animals and vice versa: “Nous pleurons la perte des bestes que nous aymons, aussi font elles la nostre” (478). Other human traits which animals possess are intraspecific assistance in times of trouble, interspecific assistance, the practice of mathematics and astrology, munificence, repentance, and clemency (478-80). All of these traits signal human virtue or excellence, but by attributing these characteristics to animals Montaigne means to disprove arguments for human superiority based on these traits and establish a nature common to both humans and animals.

Human Prejudices Surrounding the Body, Human Nature in the Body

Montaigne uses human-animal comparisons to skeptical end when he shows that the beauty of the human body is no reason to consider humans superior to animals. Montaigne’s first argument for this fact stems from human inability to define beauty. Human knowledge of beauty is just as incomplete and imperfect as its knowledge of animal nature, therefore, humans are in no position to judge their own beauty superior to other species: “Il est vray semblable que nous ne sçavons guiere que c’est que beauté en nature et en general, puisque à l’humaine et nostre beauté nous donnons tant de formes diverses : de laquelle s’il y avoit quelque prescription naturelle, nous la recognoistrions en commun, comme la chaleur du feu. Nous en fantasions les formes à nostre poste” (482). Human imagination is the cause of the many forms that humans assign beauty, and Montaigne implies that beauty itself is subjective. There is no “prescription naturelle,” no quality that one can perceive like the heat of a fire, that corresponds to beauty.

Montaigne remains uncertain as to what exactly constitutes human beauty, but has no doubts about human beauty in comparison to the beauty of animals: “Mais, quoy qu’il en soit,

nature ne nous a non plus privilegez en cela [beauty] que, au demeurant, en ses loix communes. Et si nous nous jugeons bien, nous trouverons que, s'il est quelques animaux moins favorisez en cela que nous, il y en a d'autres, et en grand nombre, qui le sont plus" (483). Elsewhere in the "Apologie," Montaigne states that if one reasons properly from human-animal comparisons, one must conclude that humans and animals have a common nature; here, he claims that if "nous jugeons bien" than we must place humans at some intermediate position on a scale of animal beauty.

As Montaigne points out, humans most closely resemble animals that they find ugly: "Celles qui nous retirent le plus, ce sont les plus laides et les plus abjectes de toute la bande : car, pour l'apparence et forme extérieure et forme du visage, ce sont les magots [...] pour le dedans et les parties vitales, c'est le pourceau" (484). Montaigne uses this resemblance as starting point for an exposition of the ugliness of humanity. As proof of human ugliness, Montaigne cites the use of clothing to cover the body from sight. Human clothing and accessories also provide Montaigne with more proof of animal beauty relative to human ugliness:

Certes, quand j'imagine l'homme tout nud (ouy en ce sexe qui semble avoir plus de part à la beauté), ses tares, sa subjection naturelle et ses imperfections, je trouve que nous avons eu plus de raison que nul autre animal de nous couvrir. Nous avons esté excusables de emprunter ceux que nature avoit favorisé en cela plus que à nous, pour nous parer de leur beauté et nous cacher sous leur despouille, laine, plume, poil, soye. (484)

Human actions betray their own recognition of animal beauty. Montaigne supports human preference for animal beauty by observing that although humans withdraw from each other's company in the course of "actions naturelles" (484) and hide their bodies from one another so as not to engender disgust, they cherish even the excretions of some animal species:

Ce n'est pas tant pudeur qu'art et prudence, qui rend nos dames si circonspectes à nous refuser l'entrée de leurs cabinets, avant qu'elles soient peintes et parées pour la montre publique [...] là où, en plusieurs animaux, il n'est rien d'eux que nous

n'aimons et qui ne plaise à nos sens, de façon que de leurs excremens mesme et de leur descharge nous tirons non seulement de la friandise au manger, mais no[s] plus riches ornements et parfums. (485)

Although Montaigne's comparison seems to present animals as superior to humans in terms of beauty, the point remains that when we examine animals and humans closely, it is not reasonable to make arguments for human superiority.

Nothing about the human form merits claims for superiority, including its upright stature. To counter arguments for superiority based on humans' erect stature, Montaigne remarks that humans are not the only animals with an upright posture, and adds that all animals, regardless of whether they stand in an upright position or not, obtain equal benefit from the orientation of their visual organs:

Et cette prerogative que les Poëtes font valoir de nostre stature droite, regardant vers le ciel son origine [...] elle est vraiment poëtique, car il y a plusieurs bestioles qui ont la veue renversée tout à faict vers le ciel ; et l'ancoleure des chameaux et des austruches, je la trouve encore plus relevée et que droite la nostre.

Quels animaux n'ont la face au haut, et ne l'ont devant, et ne regardent vis à vis comme nous, et ne descouvrent en leur juste posture autant du ciel et de la terre, que l'homme ? (483-84)

The erect stature of humans is not an exclusive trait, and even if it were, Montaigne nullifies the supposed sign of human superiority resulting from an upright posture. All animals have equal access to the heavens. Montaigne downplays the importance of looking upon the sky even more by adding that humans and animals have equal access to the earth, as well, placing heaven and earth in a position of equality. Looking below and gazing above are of equal value.

Montaigne finishes his meditation on the human form, and his comparisons between humans and animals, by demonstrating that it is not the traits humans use to establish their superiority that they value most about being human, but the mere fact that they are human.

Montaigne concludes from this that belief in human superiority is not a result of reasoning at all.

Montaigne uses the story of Ulysses and Circe to make his point:

Ils [the Stoics] disent que si Circé eust présenté à Ulysses deux breuvages, l'un pour faire devenir un homme de fol sage, l'autre de sage fol, qu'Ulysses eust de plus tost accepter celui de la folie, que de consentir que Circé eust changé sa figure humaine en celle d'une beste ; et disent que la sagesse mesme eust parlé à luy en cete maniere : Quitte moy, laisse moy là, plustot que de me loger sous la figure et corps d'un asne. Comment ? cette grande et divine sapience, les Philosophes la quittent donc pour ce voile corporel et terrestre ? Ce n'est donc plus par la raison, par le discours et par l'ame que nous excellons sur les bestes ; c'est par nostre beauté, nostre beau teint et nostre belle disposition de membres, pour laquelle il nous faut mettre nostre intelligence, nostre prudence et tout le reste à l'abandon. (485-86)

Montaigne himself seems to share the sentiments of Ulysses and the philosophers he cites, admitting as much as he reiterates that human superiority predicated upon human reason and wisdom is fantasy: “Or, j’accepte cette naïfve et franche confession. Certes, ils ont cogneu que ses parties là, dequoy nous faisons tant de feste, ce n’est que vaine fantasie” (486). What humans would quite willingly give away to preserve their human form cannot be what humans truly value, and therefore cannot be reasonably evoked as grounds for human superiority. The ancient philosophers who so highly vaunt reason and wisdom must have known this themselves in order to judge Ulysses’ choice. If there is something that humans truly value about being human, it must be what remains without reason and its corollaries: the body.

Thierry Gontier puts a nominalist spin on this conclusion: “Ce qui fait donc qu’une bête est une bête, ou qu’un homme est un homme, c’est finalement son corps, partie la plus essentielle de son être et véritable *forme* définissant l’appartenance de l’individu à l’espèce et au genre” (144). Humans do distinguish themselves from other animals by their form, but this does not mean that they are essentially different from animals. Their commonality in all other respects demonstrates their shared nature.

The only thing that distinguishes humans from animals is their outward form, though even this is similar in kind to animal bodies. It is human appearance alone that determines humanity, and human preference for its own form is a sentiment without reasonable foundations that accounts for all of humans' claims of superiority:

Quand les bestes auroient donc toute la vertu, la science, la sagesse et suffisance Stoique, ce seroyent tousjours de bestes ; ny ne seroyent pourtant comparables à un homme miserable, meschant et insensé. Enfin tout ce qui n'est pas comme nous sommes, n'est rien qui vaille. Et Dieu mesme, pour se faire valoir, il faut qu'il y retire, comme nous dirons tantost. Par où il appert que ce n'est par vray discours, mais par une fierté folle et opiniatreté, que nous nous preferons aux autres animaux et nous sequestrons de leur condition et société. (486)

Since belief in human superiority is reducible to a sentiment without reasonable foundations,⁵ and given the similarities between humans and animals that come to light when making comparisons between the two, it is unreasonable to conclude that either is superior.

In the citation above Montaigne makes a distinction between “vray discours” and “fierté folle et opiniatreté.” Both derive from our faculty to reason, though one is sound and the other mad. Distinguishing between the two is the task in which Montaigne engages via his comparison of humans and animals. Appearing in opposition to the mad belief in human superiority, human and animal equality must be the conclusion that results from “vray discours.” The only reasonable conclusion to make is that human and animals are of the same nature. From the perspective Ann Hartle adopts this means that humans are animals. She cites various statements from throughout the *Essais* in support of her conclusion that “Montaigne is insisting to man that he is an animal” (179). From this perspective, the common nature that animals and humans share is then animality. Humans are human in form the way bears are bears in form, but each is

⁵ This is a general critique of human belief present in the “Apologie,” which Aulotte summarizes: “Ce que nous appelons notre foi s’appuie sur trop de motifs humains” (33).

essentially animal. The purpose of Montaigne's entire discussion of humans and animals is to prove their common nature and thereby counter pretensions to human superiority.

CHAPTER 2: LA MOTHE LE VAYER'S *DIALOGUES FAITS À L'IMITATION DES ANCIENS*

La Mothe Le Vayer continues the skeptic tradition in France in direct lineage from Montaigne, as Richard Popkin notes: “The sceptics of the early seventeenth century, the so-called *libertins érudits*, were direct-line descendants of Montaigne and Charron, children of Sextus Empiricus, and simply anti-Aristotelians” (80). He goes on to write that their views are “seen as the link between Montaigne and Bayle and Voltaire in the development of the modern outlook” (81). J.S. Spink attributes an “attitude of pure Pyrrhonic doubt” to La Mothe Le Vayer (18), and the *Dialogues faits à l’imitation des anciens* appear relatively early in century,⁶ implying that the text belongs to the prominently skeptical period of French intellectual history that Spink has preceding Epicurean empiricism and Cartesian rationalism. The comments of Popkin and Spink place La Mothe Le Vayer and his *Dialogues* firmly in a skeptical context that traces its roots in France at least as far back as Montaigne.

La Mothe Le Vayer’s *Dialogues* exemplify the skeptical practice of making comparisons between humans and animals in order to draw out the resemblances between the two as seen in Montaigne. La Mothe Le Vayer takes the skeptic Pyrrho as his muse, and under the guise of Orasius Tubero, writes nine dialogues that challenge human superiority and the idea that humans are inherently distinct from animals. Even the rhetorical use of comparisons between humans and animals is partially traceable to Pyrrho via Diogenes Laertes who, according to Philippe-Joseph Salazar, gives the “premier mode” of Pyrrhonian skepticism as the establishment of “les différences de comportement entre l’homme comme animal et l’animal” (37). As in

⁶ René Pintard gives 1630 as the publication date of the first collection of La Mothe Le Vayer’s *Dialogues* (505). The remaining five dialogues appear the next year (Pintard 510, 512). Each volume contains false publishing information.

Montaigne's "Apologie," La Mothe Le Vayer argues for animal reasoning ability, spotlights animal behavior and emotions with human counterparts, and vacillates between reasoning in favor of equality between humans and animals and animal superiority to destabilize belief in human superiority and the preeminence of reason. Françoise Charles-Daubert affirms the common goal of the two authors: "Après Montaigne, La Mothe Le Vayer dénonce l'orgueil des hommes qui les conduit aux illusions anthropocentriques et à une conception de l'univers tout entier organisé en fonction d'eux" (59-60). Like Montaigne, La Mothe Le Vayer intends to humble humanity by pointing out the limits of human reason, the extent of human ignorance, and humanity's affinity with animals. In so doing, he valorizes the body and the passions, making them just as much a part of human nature as soul and mind. Discussions about the abilities of animals and human-animal comparisons are a rhetorical device that furthers the skeptical aims of the *Dialogues*.

Telamon and Animal Reasoning Ability

One traditional method of countering the position that use of reason demonstrates human superiority is to demonstrate that animals also reason. Arguments to this effect appear in the dialogue "De l'Ignorance louable." The dialogue format of his text allows La Mothe Le Vayer to express various opinions without supporting contradictory opinions himself. Any possibility of animal reasoning ability functions as an argument against human superiority based on the ability to reason alone and by virtue of this result against the preeminence of reason. The dialectician Telamon, whose name likely derives from the Greek hero, is the first in "De l'Ignorance louable" to discuss the ability of animals to reason.

Earlier in the dialogue Telamon assumes a position at odds with Orasius' Pyrrhonism, in support of human knowledge. Telamon explicitly states his intention to counter Pyrrhonism and the Epicureans "qui s'imaginoit qu'on pouvoit estre grand Philosophe, et ignorer tout à fait les bonnes lettres" (218). His claim that animals reason demonstrates that the position is not incompatible with opposition to the two aforementioned schools.

The passage in which Telamon's affirmation of animal reason appears also illustrates his belief that reason is the key to knowledge:

Car bien que nous voulussions supposer que quelqu'un sceust certaine chose sans la Logique, tousjours seroit-il constant qu'il ne la sçauroit que douteusement, *nesciret se scire*, et n'auroit pas l'assurance de la science ; pource que c'est la Logique qui enseigne les marques, et donne les regles du veritable sçavoir, qu'elle sousmet à la connoissance des choses par leurs causes, et à l'examen d'une legitime demonstration. Pour moy j'ay tousjours creu que les hommes ne different point plus du reste des animaux par la raison, qu'ils sont differens entr'eux par l'usage de cette mesme raison que nous enseigne la Dialectique, et qui a esté inventée, dit quelqu'un, pour suppléer à ce que la connoissance des Anges peut avoir de plus que la nostre. (236)

Telamon esteems logic and reason to the same extent that he esteems knowledge, precisely because true knowledge, "veritable savoir," is possible only via logic. Logic is therefore the highest application of reason. His veneration of reason, however, gives humans no reason to consider themselves superior to animals. His declaration that humans differ from animals no more than they differ from one another by the application of their reasoning ability emphasizes the equality of humans and animals in terms of reason. The latter is a variation on Montaigne's claim that "il y a plus de distance de tel à tel homme qu'il n'y a de tel homme à telle beste" (258).

Later, Telamon reinforces human and animal equality when he expresses a Montaignian admiration for the reason evident in the order of nature, and notes the predilection for order that humans and animals share:

...la nature est admirablement ordonnée par tout, et son esprit est celui qui communique l'ordre, et par conséquent la raison à toutes choses [...] *omnis ordo est ratio*. Platon asseuroit que le feu de Prométhée n'estoit autre chose que l'ordre qu'il avoit enseigné aux hommes [...] Je ne diray pas comme quelques uns, que l'homme seul ait du sentiment pour l'ordre, car il me semble que tous les animaux l'aiment et le recherchent... (241)

Much as Montaigne does in his *Essais*, Telamon equates order with reason. Since animals esteem order, they, just as humans, display an admiration for reason. Telamon's opinion again appears in the context of praise for logic and support for the sciences, and precedes an attack against Sextus Empiricus. Telamon represents the diversity of philosophical opinion in the first half of the seventeenth century in France. He supports his arguments with Aristotle and Plato, philosophers of the scholastics, believes in the importance of study and the truth of human science, but he admits animal reasoning and draws no important distinction between human and animal reasoning ability.

Telamon does place a boundary between humans and animals; however, that boundary is no longer reasoning ability, but education. Telamon places the humanities at the pinnacle of human achievement:

Mais à la verité on peut bien dire qu'il faudroit avoir dépouillé tout à fait l'humanité, pour souffrir sans contradiction de si déraisonnables sentimens [Epicurean], puis que ce mot d'humanité ne signifie pas tant cette bien-vueillance appelée des Grecs Philanthropie, que l'erudition et bonne institution de laquelle les hommes seuls sont capables, et qui a fait nommer proprement les lettres humaines. Que s'il se voit manifestement que nous ne differons en rien tant du reste des animaux, que par cette connoissance des bonnes lettres, il s'ensuit qu'au lieu de l'estimer vaine ou superfluë, nous serons contraints de reconnoistre ceux-là homme d'autant plus parfaits, qu'ils auront plus de cette connoissance. (218-19)

For Telamon, humans are not the reasonable animal but the educated animal. His position shows the arbitrary nature of the bases for borders between humanity and animality. If experience conflicts with divisions based on reason, language, etc., it is easy enough to find a new basis for

distinction, and only one is necessary. In his *L'Animal que donc je suis*, Derrida provides a list of abilities that philosophers have used to distinguish humans from animals, which he sums up as “le pouvoir qui consiste à avoir, pour attribut essentiel, telle ou telle faculté, donc tel ou tel pouvoir” (48). The specific ability lacks the importance of the fact of possessing an ability or faculty, power, beyond that of animals. From the position of one who exalts knowledge, knowledge is the obvious choice for distinguishing humans and animals and serves the added purpose of strengthening his arguments against skepticism. Knowledge of the “lettres humaines” not only divides humans from animals, but the more “connaissance” one has the higher level of human perfection one achieves.

Telamon admits animal reasoning, but he differs from Montaigne in that he holds to the idea of human superiority despite this admission. Telamon’s position is an example of the possibility of believing in both animal reason and human superiority and supporting this belief with rational argumentation. Telamon’s argumentation itself questions the limits of reason, its ability to resolve certain questions. Whereas one might expect the use of reasonable arguments to establish animal reasoning ability to disprove human superiority or to demonstrate a lack of animal reasoning ability to secure it, Telamon reasonably constructs a scenario in which both animal reasoning and human superiority exist. By developing opinions like Telamon’s, La Mothe Le Vayer challenges the preeminence of reason, as his predecessor Montaigne has done. La Mothe Le Vayer differs from Montaigne, however, in the extent to which he uses facetious and outrageous arguments to disarm reason, as examples later in this chapter show.

The Affinity of Humans and Animals

In the same dialogue in which Telamon states his belief in animal reasoning, Orasius remarks in passing on several resemblances between human and animal behavior. The context is a discussion of virtue and vice, but Orasius is not attempting to demonstrate that animals and humans share the same vices and virtues. Instead, he challenges the idea of vice and virtue, championing the cause of skepticism, as he admits to Telamon (297). Orasius seems to condone an attitude towards vice and virtue that he adapts from his reading of Socrates:

A la verité Senèque fait dire à Socrate, que nostre plus haute connoissance gist à sçavoir discerner le bien du mal, *hanc summam esse sapientiam, bona malaque distinguere*. Mais quiconque fera reflexion sur le genie Philosophique de ce grand personnage, qui faisoit profession publique de ne rien sçavoir que sa propre ignorance [...] se persuadera aisement avecque moi qu'il la faisoit plustost consister à reconnoistre que le bien et le mal, la vertu et le vice, n'estoient pas choses qu'on peust naturellement distinguer, mais qui dependoient purement des coustumes diverses, et des jugemens des hommes encore plus differens. (297-98)

This passage follows a list of contradictory philosophical opinions about virtue and vice, making it the final position Orasius presents, and precedes a list of examples of the differing moral attitudes of various cultures. The implication is that Orasius adopts a Socratic stance similar to Montaigne's in which virtue and vice are not absolute, but merely the arbitrary result of custom.⁷ Therefore, the similarities of animals and humans that Orasius presents are not similar moral behaviors, which require a human cultural context, but similarities between animal behavior and human behavior that often reveal that animals and humans are subject to similar stimuli and passions.

The similarity of human and animal passions extends even to the desire for happiness. Orasius makes the point in the midst of a discussion of happiness as a possible supreme virtue,

⁷ At the beginning of his long reply to Telamon on virtue, Orasius professes a skeptical stance that has no place for virtue or morality as scientific subject: "nous [skeptics] ne reconnoissons ny science aucune à cet esgard non plus qu'ailleurs, ny moeurs quelconques qu'on puisse absolument faire passer pour bonnes ou mauvaises" (273).

that a desire for happiness is natural, and therefore not exclusive to humans: “le desir de cette felicité estant selon nature, il ne peut pas estre vain et illusoire en nous ; ce qui conclurroit de mesme pour le reste des animaux, lesquels, comme ayant quelque chose de divin, dit Aristote, ont aussi à leur mode pour ce regard les mesmes sentimens que nous” (277). The skeptic has no problem with citing Aristotle, who in this case supports his general cause of discrediting human superiority. In the pursuit of happiness, humans and animals are both following the natural order of the universe, and from an Aristotelian viewpoint, both share in the divine.

Animals also share other human passions, such as anger: “La cholere a tellement son fondement en la nature, qu’il n’y a si petite mouche ny fourmy qui n’ait la sienne” (295). Anger is natural, just as the desire for happiness is. In an earlier dialogue, “Le Banquet sceptique,” Diodorus draws another comparison between the ire of humans and animals:

Nous tenons que la communion de la table concilie les esprits, et esteint les inimitiez [...] tournez la medagle, et vous trouverez, qu’aussi bien qu’Aristote a remarqué, que les plus grandes antipathies des animaux procedent de la jalousie du vivre, et des differents de la mangeaille, la plupart aussi des querelles et inimitiez des hommes aboutissent là, et les plus grandes animositez des uns contre les autres, procedent de cet interest... (91)

Food incites the passions, stimulating both human and animal aggression. The propensity to fight for food is one facet of the natural tendency to fight for survival, one aspect of the human and animal characteristic of pursuing happiness. Seen in this light, the fight for food might be a virtue, rather than vice, but either way it does not divide humans from animals.

Orasius employs bees and ants to demonstrate that both humans and animals know greed. He uses various authorities to demonstrate that avarice is not necessarily a vice, and perhaps even a virtue. He then offers the example of ants and bees as models of parsimonious behavior: “Aussi voyons-nous que les fourmis, les abeilles, et tous les plus advisez des animaux nous font leçon d’avarice et de parsimonie, en laquelle selon le proverbe Latin, consiste le plus beau de

tous les revenus” (292). Orasius highlights the practicality of ant and bee behavior, turning vice to virtue and humbling human aspirations of superiority by pointing out the excellence of insect economy. In other words, animals are capable of exceeding human capacities for prudence.

This time, Orasius uses a Hebrew proverb to support his argument:

Le proverbe des Hebreux met quatre des moindres bestes, la fourmy, le lievre, la sauterelle, et l’aragnée, pour estre chacune plus prudente que les plus advisez des hommes ; et Polybe faisant une reflexion semblable, estime l’homme le plus aisé à tromper de tous les animaux, comme celui qui ne profite jamais de ses fautes passées, tant s’en faut que la prudence soit une vertu purement humaine. (287).

As in Montaigne, the point is not to unequivocally prove that animals are superior to humans, but only that humans have no cause to suppose themselves superior to animals. Orasius does not deny humans wisdom; he remarks its limitations, its lack of perfection.

When Orasius discusses sensuality, he uses animals to argue that it is not a vice, and, conversely, that temperance is not a virtue. Telamon defines it as such but Orasius considers it only a “bride à nos inclinations naturelles” (290), and contends that it makes as little sense to define it as a virtue as to limit its sphere of influence, as Telamon has, to only the partial restriction of sensual pleasure:

Vous [Telamon] n’estes pas mieux fondez à la restreindre aux seuls excez du goust et de l’attouchement, qu’elle doit moderer, pource, dit Aristote, que les bestes ne participent avecque nous que des voluptez de ces deux sens seulement. Car l’experience nous fait voir journellement, que les autres animaux sont touchez des plaisirs de la veuë, de l’ouïe, et de l’odorat, aussi bien que les hommes. Et s’il n’y a pas plus de fondement en la nature, à vouloir brider les contentemens de quelques uns de nos sens que des autres, il semble qu’il n’y ait pas grande raison à maintenir que les excez des uns soient vicieux, et non pas les autres. (290)

Telamon does not use animals to establish virtue, but Orasius nonetheless uses animals to demonstrate the unnaturalness of Telamon’s temperance. Orasius seems to imply that the intent of Telamon’s temperance is to limit human sensual pleasures to those that animals do not share. Orasius asserts that humans and animals each find pleasure in all the senses, thus rendering any

attempt to equate virtue to the curbing of these pleasures futile. Since the repression of sensual pleasure is not a virtue, Orasius concludes excesses in sensual pleasure cannot reasonably be construed vice. Orasius' argument is dependent upon the equation of animal norms with natural norms. Animals take pleasure in the senses therefore sensuality is natural. Repression of sensual pleasures must then be unnatural. Voluptuousness is another example of an aspect of human nature that animals share, akin to another they also share, sexuality.

That both animals and humans have a sexual nature is obvious, but conversation in "Le Banquet Sceptique" points to many of the similarities that exist between human and animal sexual behavior in defense of the naturalness of these sexual acts. The topic of animal sexual behavior manifests as a result of Erastus' consideration of various attitudes towards human sexual activity. He takes masturbation as an example of sexual activity disapproved in contemporary France, although condoned in the past by Zenon and practiced by Diogenes and the Lydians in public. This reflection leads Erastus to consider other sexual activities reported in ancient texts such as love for paintings, statues, trees, and animals. All of these examples serve to illustrate the fact that human morality rests on habit and custom. This view of morality is another common feature of La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues* and Montaigne's *Essais* that attests to their skeptical underpinning.

Erastus provides a long list of examples of bestiality in the ancient world:

Commençons par la conjonction des différentes espèces, telle que de Pasiphaé avec son taureau, de Semiramis avec son cheval, et de tant d'hommes semblables à ce jeune pasteur de Periander, que Thales condamna de si bonne grace à estre marié au cas que Periander ne voulust plus recevoir de monstres. Les boucs se mesloient ordinairement avec les femmes en la ville de Mendes d'Egypte, où le Dieu Pan estoit reveré. Tous ces Faunes, Aegyptans, et Satyres de l'antiquité sont venus de cas semblables... (97)

Erastus provides more examples, as he considers the hybrid aquatic creatures he hypothesizes to be the result of bestial encounters “A quoy les Sireines et Nereïdes des anciens semblent pouvoir bien estre rapportées” (97). The fact that animals can incite human desire, and that the conjunction of humans and animals can produce offspring suggests a close relationship between human and animal nature, as does the fact that animals exhibit sexual desire for humans, also.

Erastus uses the fact of animal sexual desire for humans to repudiate the notion that bestiality is a vicious, aberrant human behavior. As in arguments from Orasius concerning temperance, Erastus employs animals as an example of what is natural, apparently holding the same assumption as Orasius that what is natural cannot be vice: “on ne peut pas dire de telles susdites et semblables copulations que ce soit une simple depravation des affections humaines ; car les autres animaux ont eu les mesmes sentimens pour nous, et les mesmes meslanges entr’eux” (98). Erastus begins his list of examples of animal interspecific sexual behavior with a present day observation: “On justicie tous les jours des chiens et des singes pour cet effet” (98), that recalls Montaigne’s own in the “Apologie de Raimond Sebond”: “il se void tous les jours des magots furieusement espris de l’amour des femmes” (472). Several examples of animal love for humans in the ancient world follow in a list more expansive than Montaigne’s in the “Apologie,” though there is some overlap. Both include the love of an elephant for a flower girl, the love of a ram for Glaucia, and a dragon’s love for a girl (Montaigne 472/La Mothe Le Vayer 99). Although Erastus aims to demonstrate that bestiality is natural, his examples also serve the purpose to which Montaigne puts such examples: Both humans and animals engage in interspecific sexual behavior, and this commonality indicates their shared nature.

The demonstration of the naturalness of bestiality is, however, Erastus’ principal concern, as his reaffirmation of this point at the end of the passage on interspecific sexuality indicates:

“Cette conjunction de l’homme avec les autres especes d’animaux est donc veritablement fort vicieuse, selon nos moeurs, et nos loix, ausquelles nostre secte [Pyrrhonism] preste toute obeissance, mais non pas absolument contre nature, qui semble se plaire en cette diversit  ” (99-100). Erastus uses animals when he makes the same point about homosexual and incestuous behavior, providing a stream of examples of homosexuality in the ancient world (100-01). Homosexuality is “si estendu   par tout l’univers, que non seulement nous voyons les chevaux, les perdrix, et tant d’autres animaux en estre touchez entr’eux, mais mesmes que le cheval du beau Socles Athenien, voulut petulamment abuser de son maistre” (101). Erastus’ point is that homosexuality is part of the natural order of the world, homosexual acts among animals, including homosexuality between animals and humans, serve to reinforce the naturalness of homosexual behavior.

Erastus replicates his method when he deals with incest, a list of examples from the ancient world (102-03) precedes the observation that animals also practice incest: “Pour ce qui est de ce pretendu respect des animaux, les chiens, les chats, et autres semblables nous montrent journellement le contre” (103). As in the case of homosexuality and bestiality, Erastus’ primary preoccupation is the arbitrary nature of contemporary proscriptions against incest: “nous sommes contraints d’advo  er que ce qui est inceste aujourd’huy, estoit innocence    la naissance du monde” (103). What is different between “la naissance du monde” and “aujourd’huy” is the institution of cultural codes against incest. Erastus employs all of his reflexions on animal sexual activity as support for his opinion that moral standards concerning human sexuality are arbitrary, and that the various sexual behaviors he considers are all part of the natural order.

In the dialogue “Du Mariage,” animals again appear in order to foil pretensions of human excellence in virtue. Philocles takes the place of Orasius when he challenges the idea of jealousy

as vice, much as Orasius takes on the concept of temperance as virtue. Philocles believes that jealousy is necessary to counter the natural tendency for promiscuity, and that it is just to do so since one adopts the norms and standards of one's society: "Mais après tout cela je ne laisseray pas de vous maintenir, que puis qu'il faut vivre sous les loix qui sont établies avant nous, et que nous avons trouvé le monde qui avoit convenu de ces principes d'honneur, il faut que nostre discours s'y accommode, et qu'en suite nos actions en despendent" (486). According to Philocles, jealousy is a passion that one must transfigure into action: "Si nous ne pouvons surmonter le vice [unfaithfulness], pour le moins tesmoignons que nous en avons aversion, et faisons nostre possible pour le limiter et retraindre" (487). Although acting upon one's jealousy might be construed as being contrary to the natural order of the world, Philocles uses animals to show that this is not the case: "La plupart des animaux que nous nommons desraisonnables nous font icy nostre leçon. Les Lions deschirent les Leopards reconnoissant en eux les marques des adulteres de leurs meres ; le Bouc a ses justes ressentiments contre Cratis, et luy voyant caresser sa Chèvre le choque jusques à le faire mourir" (487). Philocles considers the extremes to which animals express their jealousy a model for human behavior.

Like Telamon, Philocles is a representative of the diversity of philosophical opinion in seventeenth-century France. His stance results from the dual influences of societal norms and an appeal to nature. As a Pyrrhonist, Philocles understands the world by an examination of nature, but acts in accordance with the laws and customs of his country. His position on jealousy demonstrates the tension that exists between an Epicurean admiration for the natural order and the need to conform to cultural norms. French culture dictates the nature of honor. In order to preserve one's honor, it is necessary to express outrage for acts of infidelity, despite one's personal beliefs or the lessons of nature (486-88). Philocles defends jealous acts to preserve

one's reputation, although he does not share his culture's conception of honor: "Je...vous confesseray avoir tousjours esté de ce sentiment, que les hommes ne pouvoient faire paroistre davantage leur sottise, que de faire despendre leur reputation d'un animal tel que la femme, et encores de la partie qui est en elle la plus difficile à cautionner" (486). He also concedes that promiscuity is a natural tendency, but for precisely that reason it is necessary to act jealously to preserve one's reputation (486). Animals offer Philocles a means of integrating the cultural norms to which he feels he must comply with natural behavior.

In the same dialogue on marriage, Cassander reconciles cultural norms and nature when he defends the custom. He begins his defense with a light-hearted appeal to the love apparent between the earth and sky, which he draws from antiquity. When he wishes to make his argument less extravagant, he begins with the example of animals. His introduction specifies his goal of demonstrating the degree to which love and marriage permeate all of nature:

Or pource que vous riez d'un mariage contracté entre des parties si fort esloignées, je vous le veux faire observer plus en particulier par tous les ordres de la Nature, m'assurant que vous serez contraint de m'advoüer, *non tam esse Jovis omnia plena quam amoris* ; et que les anciens avoient raison de peindre cet amour ayant le Dieu Pan à ses pieds, puis qu'il n'y a rien en l'univer qui ne se soubmette à luy. Car non seulement nous voyons les animaux privez se tenir unis par ce lien conjugal, les Tigres encores et les Lions les plus farouches s'y captivent dans les forests, les oiseaux dans la liberté de l'air s'y astreignent, et les poissons ressentent sous les eaux le feu de cet hymenée, *quidam pisces non modo gregales, sed etiam conjugales*, dit Aristote au neufiesme de leur histoire. (454)

On land, sea, and in the air, animals exhibit conjugality. True to his word, Cassander goes on to illustrate examples of marriage in the plant and mineral kingdoms, and to list a number of marriages among the gods of a variety of religious traditions (454-55). All of Cassander's examples highlight the naturalness of marriage, with the implicit understanding that what is natural is good, and that given this understanding, one should not scorn the idea of matrimony.

One might counter that marriage amongst humans is not just a practice, but an institution governed by law. That is to say, that marriage amongst humans has a political existence that it does not have in animal society. The dialogue “De la Politique” sheds light on this problem. Orontes provides examples from the animal world of various forms of government: “La nature semble autoriser l’Estat populaire parmy les fourmis ; elle fait vivre les Gruës Aristocratiquement ; et nous donne un exemple de la Principauté dans la petite souveraineté des abeilles” (400). Animal society is analogous to human political structures; both govern the conduct of society whatever the mechanisms behind its implementation might be. In other words, both animals and humans are political, and this fact is another indication of their shared nature. In the same dialogue, Telamon elucidates another political characteristic that animals share with humans, patriotism: “les bestes les plus ferocent aiment les bois où elles sont nées, et se sentent touchées de cet amour tendre envers leur païs. Les poissons mesmes sous les eaux, comme a remarqué Aristote, n’en sont pas exempts” (395). Telamon intends to defend patriotism much as he and others in the dialogues defend other human acts, by pointing out its naturalness.

Although the display of similarities between human and animal nature in the *Dialogues* appear most often in the context of affirmation of human behavior that the dialecticians’ society conventionally considers aberrance, or the demonstration of the arbitrariness of this society’s conventions themselves à la Montaigne, the resemblances between human and animals still act as reminders of the affinity and equality of the two. This function of La Mothe Le Vayer’s treatment of vice and virtue follows Montaigne’s discussions of the same in the “Apologie de Raimond Sebond.”

There are points in the *Dialogues*, however, that undermine human-animal equality, and thus challenge again the ability of reason to resolve the question of human superiority, as in “De la Politique,” where both human and animal superiority serve a rhetorical purpose. Telamon opens the dialogue with the following proclamation:

Puis que l’homme est naturellement le plus Politique de tous les animaux, n’y ayant selon la consideration d’Aristote, ny abeilles, ny fourmis, ny autres animaux quelconques, qui soient nais et se plaisent à la communauté comme luy, il semble qu’on puisse bien inferer de là, que l’estude du gouvernement d’Estat, qu’on appelle ordinairement la Politique, soit une des plus dignes contemplations de son esprit, et l’employ qu’il peut recevoir dans ce gouvernement, la plus belle action, où il se puisse porter, puis qu’elle luy est si naturelle, et que, par l’advis des plus sages, ce qui se fait le plus naturellement, se fait aussi le plus raisonnablement... (387)

Telamon is not saying that animals are not political: he later acknowledges their patriotism, for example (395). Thus there is no clear divide between animals and humans along political lines. Telamon is saying that humans excel over animals in politics. Even more striking is his reasoning that human excellence in politics implies that political practice is the highest function of humanity.⁸ That humans are superior to animals in this domain is not the reason behind his conclusion; it is rather that human excellence in politics is indication of the extremity of its naturalness to human nature. Naturalness equals reasonableness. Telamon adopts a standpoint in which humans are in some limited sense superior to animals without leaving his skeptical base. Nature condones his view. He also assumes a Montaignian position regarding human and animal abilities for politics; Telamon confers a political nature to both animals and humans but they differ in degree.

⁸ The fact that Telamon does so despite his earlier emphasis on education as the basis of human perfection demonstrates the malleability of reason, its ability to support contradictory opinions, and is another way in which La Mothe Le Vayer questions the limits of reason.

Orontes implies animal superiority in a limited sense when he discusses tyranny. By their tyrannical behavior, humans demonstrate inferiority to some species of animals among which this behavior is absent: “Les Rois de la terre ne sont pas tous comme celuy des abeilles qui ne porte point d’esguillon, ou comme celuy des eaux, Aristote ayant observé que le Dauphin (riche figure de celuy qui doit posséder le sceptre François) est seul entre tous les animaux pulmoniques de la mer qui n’a point de fiel” (432). In another example, the power locusts exert over all despite their lack of a ruler reveals their superior wisdom: “Salomon [...] met entre les quatre animaux qui passent en sagesse les plus advisez des hommes, *locustam, quae regem non habet, et egreditur universa per turmas suas*” (432). Certain species of animals surpass humans in some aspects of government, but there is again no absolute distinction between humans and animals. Locusts treat their human subjects poorly, embodying a group tyranny, and a French prince might live as peacefully as symbolic namesake, the dolphin “qui n’a point de fiel.” Orontes’ general subject is not animal superiority, but one of the pitfalls of monarchy. As for Epicurus and Montaigne, La Mothe Le Vayer’s animals provide a model to follow or to avoid, because the lesson comes in either case straight from nature.

In some cases humans cede their authority to animals, in an attitude that patently assumes animal superiority. Such is the case with animal worship. Orontes takes up the subject in “De la Divinité.” His aim is to highlight the arbitrary nature of religion by detailing the diversity of human religion. The Earth “ne contient rien en soy de si vil, qui n’ait esté par quelques uns canonisé” (344). This includes her animals: “Car non seulement les plus nobles, et les plus utiles d’entre ses animaux ont esté adorez par les Egyptiens, et autres peuples qui s’en trouvoient beneficiez ; mais mesme les plus vils, et les plus malfaisans, d’entr’eux” (344). The fact that various peoples might worship one or the other, the beneficial or the malign, underscores the

arbitrary nature of religion as well as the long list of animal deities Orontes details. The Tartars' method of choosing a subject of worship is the epitome of randomness. They "deferent cet honneur à la premiere beste que le jour leur fait avoir à la rencontre" (345). The fact that what one culture abhors, another worships is also indication of the arbitrariness of religion. Orontes uses the snake to make this point: "Pour le regard des autres animaux, qu'y a-t'il de plus maudit parmy nous, et de plus abominé [...] que le Serpent ? Si est-ce que celuy d'Esculape a esté placé dans le Ciel par les anciens, et le faux prophete ou Pseudomante Alexandre se voulut deifier par un semblable dans Lucien" (345). In the case of the serpent, worship does not necessarily depend on its benevolence or malevolence; Orontes gives examples of both when he leaves more fanciful cases of snake worship for contemporary occurrences:

En Calicut on puniroit de mort celuy qui en auroit tué un, sa rencontre estant réputée au meilleur augure qu'on puisse recevoir, au dire de Louïs Barthelemy ; et Sigismond d'Herbestain en sa Moscovie, nous assure que les Samogitiens sont tellement idolatres des serpens, qu'ils attribuent tous les malheurs qui leur peuvent arriver à ne les avoir pas assez bien traictez et nourris. (345)

Animal worship serves Orontes' purpose of exposing the arbitrary nature of religion well, but also reveals a deference for animals among humans that raises the question of animal superiority.

Elsewhere, more direct reference to animal superiority takes place, limited in form and for rhetorical purposes in contexts that have no connection to animal nature. In "De l'Ignorance louable," Telamon signals the excellence of animal invention, which he contrasts with human deficiencies in this regard:

C'est le défaut de cet entretien et de ce discours mental [human] qui fait que je m'étonne moins que les Egyptiens, lesquels canonisoient les inventeurs des choses, eussent beaucoup plus de figures d'animaux consacrez que d'hommes, pource que l'instinct naturel des bestes leur a fait trouver, et leur a indiqué mille bonnes choses, dont le profit est venu jusques à nous ; là où les hommes, qui ont la ratiocination interieure au lieu de cet instinct, en sçavent si peu l'usage, et s'en servent si mal, qu'ils n'ont que fort rarement mérité la gloire de l'invention. (214)

Telamon here provides another example of the diversity of opinion regarding human and animal nature. He denies internal discourse to animals, and relegates their creative activity to instinct, but he does not strip their creation of the title of invention. He also does not judge it according to a different standard than human creation. He evaluates human and animal invention according to their results and concedes that human invention is inferior. Rather than a deficiency, the lack of an internal discourse is apparently an advantage for animals. Instinct, in this case, is superior to conscious mental reasoning. Unlike Montaigne, Telamon does not mean to denigrate the importance of reason to human nature; he considers human reflection noble (214). His purpose is to draw attention to the poor usage of reason, the true cause of its inadequacies. Telamon condones reflection, study, and conditioning of reason in proper proportion to the importance he assigns it. Declaring animals superior to humans in terms of invention is merely a means of making his point.

Claims of animal superiority for rhetorical effect are a recurring motif in the *Dialogues*, as a passage in another dialogue illustrates. In “De la Vie privée,” Philoponus attempts to convince Hesychius that his retreat from active life is unhealthy. His first argument is similar to Telamon’s in favor of politics in that it rests on the excellence of humanity in the particular field in question, in this case, sociability: “Si m’advoüerez-vous qu’Aristote, Caton, et assez d’autres, pour preuve que l’homme est le plus sociable de tous les animaux, remarquent qu’il n’y a personne qui voulust posséder tous les biens ensemble, s’il falloit qu’il en jouïst seul, pource qu’en cette solitude il ne peut y avoir aucune satisfaction, ny contentement” (133). Philoponus goes on to describe what joy is possible in solitude as depravity, a happiness “qui procede d’un temperament bruslé et corrompu” (133). An active life in society is natural to man, while solitude of the sort Hesychius seeks holds only illusory pleasures (133).

Philoponus uses an animal metaphor to describe Hesychius' quest that highlights the unhealthiness of his desire: "Que si nous plaisons quelquefois à nous ronger le coeur à l'écart, ainsi que fait Ajax dans Homere, et que nostre humeur nous porte à nous tirer à part, pour y couvrir seuls, comme le crapaut, nostre venin, ce sont des effets d'une profonde melancholie" (133). He uses another as he ridicules what Hesychius takes for a boon: "Et quels charmes vous ont ensorcelé si puissamment, que vous mettiez la felicité en une chose qui rendroit les hommes endormis plus heureux qu'estans esveillez ? Les Ours et autres animaux assoupis la plus grande partie de l'année, auroient un grand avantage sur nous" (134). This facetious argument serves the purpose of deflating Hesychius' lofty goals by equating them with an uncomplicated and common animal activity. Philoponus' aim is to return Hesychius to his true nature, human nature, by elucidating the true condition of the retreat he desires. The private life dedicated to study he envisions is nothing more than suffering: "Le mont Caucase nous represente la solitude dont vous faites profession, l'Aigle ronge son [Prometheus'] foye renaissant, c'est la contemplation dont vous affligez incessamment vostre esprit, dans une recherche de causes et de raisons, qui pullulent l'une par l'autre, et se produisent à l'infiny" (133-34). Philoponus employs his reason to fabricate a ridiculous line of reasoning so as to point out the fallibility of reason itself and the danger of basing one's life on the acquisition of knowledge obtained by its use.

La Mothe Le Vayer takes this type of facetious argumentation to its extreme when he makes his case for donkey supremacy. Besides constituting a burlesque treatment of arguments for human superiority that mock their intentions, the humor of the *Dialogues* destabilizes reason. Although La Mothe Le Vayer's humor-laden method differs from Montaigne's, his challenge to the preeminence of reason is common to the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" and the *Essais* in general. Bernard Roche places La Mothe Le Vayer's work "sous le signe du *katagelos*. Cette

forme de rire dénigrant qui appuie une logique de distinction en opérant une discrimination des esprits” (92). This division between “d’un côté émetteurs prolixes d’une parole dérégulée et de l’autre, ceux qui sont guidés par la prudence et la raison éclairée” materializes as ridicule of one side for the other (91). Roche uses the example of Éphestion in “De la philosophie sceptique” to illustrate this effect. Éphestion “pousse son adversaire en deçà des bornes de la rationalité, dans le monde de la folie ou, ce qui est plus insultant, réduit son discours aux opinions ‘impertinantes’ du vulgaire” (Roche 91). Likewise on one occasion he responds “en guise de réfutation” with “l’ironie et le rire de Lucien” (92). Mockery is a means of refutation precisely because it refuses to admit the preeminence of reason. Constructing a burlesque of arguments for human superiority is a way of belittling those arguments and the reason that is their source.

La Mothe Le Vayer’s Philonius expounds on donkey superiority in “Des Rares et éminentes qualités des ânes de ce temps,” remarking upon the qualities that donkeys share with humans and by which they surpass them. Philonius assigns many virtues to the donkey, including beauty. He first asserts that nature privileges the asinine form:

Car quant à la symmetrie de ses membres, outre qu’elle est aussi admirable, encores est-elle d’autant plus estimable, qu’on ne la voit point defectueuse, la Nature ne produisant rien de monstrueux en cette espece comme en la nostre ; faisant bien voir par là qu’elle ne travaille à la formation de l’homme que fort negligemment, mais que quand il est question d’engendrer un Asne, elle s’y porte toute entiere, comme à un ouvrage qui la touche de plus près, et qu’elle veut rendre de tout point accompli. (168)

Philonius’ argument in this case attacks human pretensions by offering evidence of donkey superiority in terms of beauty. The donkey reflects a more perfect being because it is “plus près” to nature. Humans, whose limbs are defective to the point of monstrosity, should admire the donkey’s symmetry. Philonius’ argument implies that humans deviate from what is natural, and

that what is natural is good. The goal of the argument is to humble human pretensions of superiority.

To further destabilize human pride, Philonius points out the relativity of beauty:

Vous me direz, d'où vient donc que nous n'appercevons, ny ne sommes touchez de ces rares beautez et perfections Asinines ? A cela je vous responds, qu'un Asne en diroit bien autant des nostres, s'il avoit autant de philautie que nous, ou qu'il ne discourust un peu en meilleure forme. Car pour le premier pinct, c'est un certain amour de nous-mesmes, qui nous represente jusques à la beauté des Dieux en figure humaine, comme si chaque espece du reste des animaux ne pouvoit pas former une mesme conception à son advantage, et à sa mode, la Taupe se figurant un Dieu aveugle, l'Aigle un Dieu volant, le Dauphin quelque Triton fendant les eaux. Ce qui vient d'un charme physique, que la Nature, comme maquerelle d'elle-mesme, dit Ciceron, à imprimé en tous ses ouvrages, qui s'estiment chacun pour le plus beau et accompli... (169)

From this viewpoint, donkeys are no more beautiful than humans, but their beauty is relative to their own species. Donkeys, however, do not remark on the lack of beauty and perfection of humans because they are not as preoccupied with their own relative excellence, lacking “philautie” to the same extent as humans. The point remains that each species has a natural propensity to privilege its own appearance.

When Philonius takes up his second explanation for the inability of humans to appreciate donkey beauty, he adds the differences in perception between species to the natural instinct to admire one's own beauty:

Or, non plus que le goust ne juge pas des couleurs, ny l'odorat de la difference des sons, par mesme disproportion, une espece d'entre les animaux ne peut former un jugement solide et raisonnable des qualitez essentielles des autres. Ce qu'estant fort bien entendu par l'Asne, *asinus asino pulcher*, et on n'a jamais ouy dire qu'il ait voulu disputer de la beauté humaine, comme aujourd'huy temerairement nous voulons faire de l'Asinine... (170)

Since physical beauty is relative, the question of ascertaining the beauty of any particular species from outside of that species is problematic. Philonius concludes that it is impossible to directly know the beauty of the donkey; one can only infer it. He does believe that one can infer that

asinine beauty is of a high order and even superior to that of humans: “N’attendez donc pas de moy que je m’ingere de vous dire par le menu en quoy consiste cette beauté rare et inconnuë, me suffisant de vous avoir fait voir qu’elle ne peut estre autre que tres-exquise, et j’ose dire plus qu’humaine” (171). Philonius’ consideration of donkey beauty implies that a complete and objective knowledge of animal nature exceeds human abilities of comprehension since humans can only understand animality from a human perspective. The argument displays the limits human of reason.

The asinine form presents other opportunities for reflection, and Philonius exploits them when he examines donkey temperance. Temperance is another virtue he ascribes to the donkey. Donkeys practice moderation when it comes to sensual pleasures, their temperance “fait garder une mediocrité aux plaisirs dont sont capables les sens du goust, et de l’attouchement, ayant pour regle la nécessité naturelle” (181). Philonius attributes the donkey’s vigorous health to the moderation they show in their eating and drinking habits (181),⁹ but pauses to examine the pleasures of the flesh more closely before concluding in favor of donkey sexual temperance. He takes the donkey’s physical attributes as his point of departure:

Prenons garde s’il est aussi retenu aux autres plaisirs, qu’on appelle vulgairement de la chair. Vous sçavez comme la Nature l’a advantageusement pourveu des parties ministrantes à cet effet [...] La Nature donc ne faisant rien en vain, il est aisé de deviner à quel usage elle a voué ce merveilleux outil ; et qu’elle ne s’est pas oubliée de donner l’instinct, le courage, et les forces, pour l’employer aux fins ausquelles elle l’a destiné. (181-82)

Philonius implies that the donkey’s large member gives it an advantage over humans, and indicates that it is natural for the donkey to make use of it, since nature intends it so. The donkey

⁹ Philonius also uses the donkey’s moderation to ridicule a presumed human virtue, abstinence from drink, by punning on the word ass: “Je diray seulement, à cause que les hommes ont fait icy du vice vertu, et de l’yvrongnerie une puissante divinité, qu’il y a des nations d’Asnes entieres...si ennemis de cet infame desbordement, qu’ils passent volontairement toute leur vie sans boire” (181). As the title of the dialogue suggests, this practice occurs throughout the text.

has physical endurance and sex drive in proportion to the size of its penis, and so it follows that the standard for sexual temperance in the case of a donkey differs from that for a human male.

Indeed, Philonius believes that the fact that nature privileges the donkey with a greater capacity for love-making than humans allows for the attainment of perfection in the sexual act: “tant s’en faut que ces inclinations de nature soient un obstacle à la vertu, qu’au contraire, elles peuvent servir comme de degrez pour parvenir à une plus éminente perfection” (182).

Presumably arguing from the donkey’s physical endowments and concupiscence, Philonius asserts that the donkey’s very essence lies in its sexuality which finds its expression in the sexual act: “j’advoüeray ingenuëment qu’aussi bien qu’Alexandre ne se reconnoissoit jamais mieux homme, et non fils de Jupiter, qu’en la pratique des pasetemps amoureux ; l’Asne de mesme ne se trouve jamais plus Asne, que par la cheute (qu’il fait neantmoins assez volontiers) en cette courte et plaisante epilepsie” (182). The equation of Alexander to donkey validates the human body and bodily pleasures, and marks a shift in Philonius’ discussion. His subject is no longer the excellence of donkey sexuality, but rather the crime versus nature that abstinence from sexual activity embodies in the case of humans and donkeys alike.

Philonius restates his position that nature excuses the donkey’s proclivity for sex, which he buttresses with the comparison to Alexander: “O qu’excusable est celui auquel on ne peut reprocher d’imperfections, que la Nature ne soit preste d’advoüer, et qui ne luy soient communes avec les plus grands personnages dont la memoire soit venuë jusques à nous” (182). The donkey’s sexual behavior cannot be vice. It would be unnatural for donkeys to refrain from satisfying their sexual desires, and Philonius believes that any means for doing so, including homosexual acts, are excusable given the conditions of his captivity among humans.

A la verité on peut dire qu’il est en quelque façon plus excusable que tous ces grands Philosophes du temps passé, qui sous une foy Socratique se donnoient

pleinement liberté en cela [homosexuality], ne manquant pas de sujets légitimes pour satisfaire à Dame Nature ; là où faisant vivre ce pauvre animal dans une continence forcée, et contre ses vœux et intentions dans une chasteté plus que claustrale, ce n'est pas merveille s'il a recours aux remèdes extrêmes ; luy defaillant principalement les moyens [...] et luy manquant cet organe des organes, et cette main secourable [...] De sorte que ne se pouvant pas subvenir à soi-même, comme font beaucoup d'honnêtes personnes, lesquelles dans ces fascheuses contraintes ont recours aux armes naturelles [...] il semble que nous soyons obligés de donner humainement et Asinesquement quelque chose à la fragilité de la chair, veu mesmement la belle pièce qu'il en a, laquelle nous voyons luy molester si souvent les flancs. Car qui est celui entre les hommes, lequel en possédant la moitié seulement, ne fust bien fâché de la tenir inutile, et qui ne creust en vertu d'icelle se rendre aussi puissant dans l'Empire d'Amour, que Cupidon mêmes avec toutes ses flèches ? (183)

Although Philonius is defending donkey sexuality, the continual comparisons to humans engaging in similar sexual behavior draws attention to human intemperance, which by his description exceeds donkeys'. Humans use their hands to masturbate, something donkeys cannot do, and engage in homosexual activity freely. They prove themselves just as lusty as donkeys despite the fact that the human penis is only half the size of the donkey's, which in Philonius' ridiculous argument corresponds to the force of the libido.

On the one hand, Philonius' rant shames and humbles humans, as they are unable to match the donkey's temperance. On the other hand, his defense of donkey intemperance transfers to human intemperance. Neither donkey nor human sexuality is a vice given the natural "fragilité de la chair" that Philonius attributes "humainement et Asinesquement"¹⁰ (183).

Expanding the embrace of his defense to the human sexual acts he equates with the donkey's, Philonius' remarks serve to exculpate human sexuality in general and specific human sexual acts such as sodomy and masturbation, affirming the attitude seen in "Le Banquet sceptique."

Abstaining from sexual satisfaction is unnatural for both humans and donkeys. Although La

¹⁰ The capitalization of La Mothe Le Vayer's silly adjective, "Asinesquement," is a tribute to the donkey's excellence.

Mothe Le Vayer's point here is that proscriptions against sexuality have no reasonable basis, Philonius' exposition also demonstrates that in terms of sexual appetites and their satisfaction, humans and animals are equal.

Elsewhere, Philonius points to other donkey activities common to humans, such as religion. Philonius offers the example of elephant religion, which Montaigne also mentions in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," prior to introducing the possibility of donkey religious practice which he supports with a string of far-fetched reasons that include the inversion of the letters used in Hebrew to signify donkey to form piety, a fable detailing a donkey envoy to Jupiter, and the fact that the goddess Isis chooses donkeys to carry her image and other relics (174-75). Although Philonius intends his commentary on donkey religion to be humorous, it also supports the skeptical cause that permeates the *Dialogues* in that humans cannot be sure that donkeys do not have religion, all the more since there is evidence to support it. Donkey religion also undermines human pretensions of superiority. If donkeys practice religion, than religion does not distinguish humans from animals. Philonius even supposes that donkeys are "les plus religieux de tous les animaux" (175), since Isis privileges them above all others. Religiosity implies spirituality, and Philonius argues for this commonality, as well.¹¹

Philonius not only attributes spirituality to donkeys, but even goes so far as to define the donkey's mind as its essence, although he later allots this place to its sexuality, as seen above. The tongue-in-cheek nature of his argument makes this contradiction palatable: "Venons donc maintenant à son principal talent, je veux dire aux biens de l'esprit, partie superieure en luy aussi

¹¹ The subject of animal religion also appears in a dialogue with a more serious tone, "De la Divinité." Orasius presents the opinion that a recognition of God is a human instinct that animals may also share. According to this position, "naturellement l'homme est porté à la reconnoissance d'un Dieu, par des principes Physiques, et qui sont nais avec luy, avec suspicion mesme que le reste des animaux n'en soient pas totalement despourvus" (315).

bien comme en nous, et par laquelle il se peut dire veritablement Asne, c'est à dire, animal discourant en son espece, raisonnant à sa mode, et philosophant sous ses principes certains et infaillibles" (172). Here the donkey represents dogmatic thinkers as Philonius puns on the word ass, a fact that leads the reader to assume his claim that the mind is the superior part of humanity is a jest.

Nonetheless, Philonius does elsewhere hold up the donkey as a symbol of wisdom and a model to follow: "quant à moy, je me suis proposé la vie exemplaire d'un Asne tres accompli, sous l'autorité duquel, me le remettant sans cesse devant les yeux, je regle et dispense tout le cours de la mienne" (194). The wisdom Philonius admires is that which both the donkey and a great philosophers such as Epicurus and Pyrrho exemplify:

Je sçay bien qu'il y a eu aussi des Philosophes qui ont mis le souverain bien en la volupté. Mais s'ils l'ont entenduë spirituelle, comme il semble que ce fust le sentiment du bon Epicure, auquel on a imposé calomnieusement ce qu'on a voulu ; en ce cas, l'Asne demeure tousjours sur ses pieds, sans rien perdre de ses prerogatives. Si au contraire l'on vouloit parler de ses impures et croupissantes voluptés, j'advouë que nous serions bien loing de nostre compte. Car tant s'en faut que nostre Philosophe basté soit jusques à ce poinct sensuel, qu'au contraire, inclinant un peu vers la Sceptique, il use en la pluspart de ses actions une epoque et suspension d'esprit nompareille, deferant si peu au rapport des sens, que comme il falloit, à ce que quelques uns ont dit, que les disciples de Pyrrho le tirassent et écartassent des precipices, et autres dangereuses rencontres, où il se fut aussi tost porté qu'aux plus beaux chemins, sur le doute où il estoit de la fidelité des sens ; de mesme vous voyez souvent tel Asne, qui par force et confirmation d'esprit ne veut croire rien moins que ce qu'il ressent, si bien que plus il reçoit de coups de baston, moins il s'émeut en son harnois, doutant que ce soient vrais coups de baston, ce qu'il montre, et fait voir assez clairement, en ne bougent pour cela d'une place, comme immobile, avec une resolution vrayement Pyrrhoniene... (186-7)

According to Philonius' absurd reasoning, the donkey displays the same skeptical tendencies as Pyrrho and by virtue of this fact is no less than a paragon of Pyrrhonian excellence. The donkey's wisdom, along with all the other virtuous qualities it possesses, prove that it is at least the equal of the human race, if not superior to it, in both mind and body.

Like Montaigne's "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues* argue for a nature common to both humans and animals. Both texts use arguments in favor of animal superiority to unmask the invalidity of arguments for human superiority, while the *Dialogues* add outrageous humor to these arguments to heighten their effect. Although it is impossible to attribute a specific attitude to La Mothe Le Vayer based on the opinions of the various interlocutors of his dialogues, the text itself shows a Montaignian tendency to relegate moral standards to custom and habit, to limit the capabilities of reason, and to underscore the equality of human and animal nature.

Animality and Corporality

The human division into mind and body is a subject of debate in many of the dialogues. Questions surround the relative importance of each of humankind's parts, the validity of separating mind and body into distinct objects, and, if this separation is valid, whether or not the soul is immortal. The responses to these questions have repercussions for the animal world, although animals are not a necessary part of the discussion in the *Dialogues*. The question of whether or not animals, too, have souls, and if so, whether or not their souls are immortal, does present itself, however, but without the development seen following the Gassendi-Descartes controversy. The relative unimportance of animals to debate on the nature of the soul in the *Dialogues* is evidence of the shift in the rhetorical use of animals that takes place as result of the dispute between Gassendi and Descartes.

La Mothe Le Vayer's use of the dialogue format allows him to consider various view points, and some of his dialecticians argue for the preeminence of mind and reason, while others stress the importance of the body. The immortality of the soul comes under the fire of numerous

participants in the debate, particularly in “De l’Ignorance louable,” where the subject receives the most consideration. The question of the relative importance of the mind and body occurs throughout the *Dialogues*, even in one such as “Du Mariage.”

In “Du Mariage,” Philocles assumes the position of the preeminence of mind. The body is fallible, the human senses being imperfect and subject to outside influence. The mind and its reasoning processes arrive at more certain truth: “Les yeux, Cassander, dont l’homme doit voir le plus clair sont ceux de l’esprit, qui luy font appercevoir, en suite de certains antecedens, des consequences absolument necessaires ; et de quelques conjectures bien prises et raisonnées, luy font tirer des resolutions toutes certaines. De ces yeux-là il penetre bien plus avant que de ceux du corps” (488). In this case, there is indication that the position is more than rhetorical, as Philocles later defends the eternal rewards of a spiritual life against the immortality offspring afford to their progenitors:

Mais je vous diray bien premierement, qu’assez de personnes ont estimé que n’avoir point d’enfans c’estoit un bien inconnu, et peut-estre n’y eut-il jamais plus de subject de le croire, si vous pesez bien les conditions du temps present. Aussi Thales, Zenon, Diogene, Platon mesme contrevenant à ses loix, et assez d’autre grands personnages, qui tous ont fait gloire de n’avoir point de descendans d’eux, ont assez fait voir qu’ils attendoient bien l’eternité ailleurs. En second lieu, je vous soustiendray, que comme le corps se peut justement attribuer les enfans dont nous parlons, l’ame aussi a ceux qui luy sont propres, c’est à sçavoir, les labours de ses estudes, les fruicts de ses veilles et meditations, et generalement toutes ses actons vertueuses, desquelles nous devons nous promettre une veritable immortalité. Et cela d’autant plustost, que la premiere façon de se perpetuer par filiation, nous est commune avec le reste des animaux, voire mesme avec les plantes;¹² là cette autre estant toute spirituelle et divine, doit aussi pour ce sujet estre seule estimée propre à l’homme, et seule digne d’estre l’object de son esprit. (505-06)

¹² Cassander makes the same argument earlier in the dialogue: “si nous y [in marriage] cherchions autre chose, nous n’y aurions aussi aucun avantage sur le reste des animaux, qui y trouvent cette perpetuité de lignée aussi bien comme nous ; les plantes mesmes ayant une pareille faculté de produire leurs semblables” (457).

The driving force of Philocles' second argument is the difference between humans and animals. He implies that the immortal rewards of the soul are exclusive to humanity, while pointing out that the physical immortality that progeniture represent is common to animals and even plants. The tacit implication is that qualities humans share with animals are of lesser value than exclusively human characteristics. Since, in Philocles' view, humans separate from animals via their minds, the mind is of greater value than the body.

Not as clear in his judgment as Philocles, Orontes struggles with the relative importance of mind and body when he examines the phenomenon of war in "De la Politique." Much as Philocles vaunts the rewards of spirituality as he denigrates earthly aspirations for immortality, Orontes questions political aspiration, which he places in contrast with intellectual endeavors, moving through a lengthy tribute to the exploration of the wonders of the world before arriving at metaphysical contemplation:

Mais si passant plus outre, et nous eslevant par un effort d'esprit genereux au dessus de l'imbecillité de nostre nature, nous portons nostre veuë vers le Ciel, pour y contempler les revolutions de ces spheres. Si nous nous attachons aux opinions qu'ont eu les anciens des Dieux et de la Nature ; comme ils ont raisonné sur la mortalité ou immortalité de nostre ame ; combien ils se sont peinez en vain pour accorder la Providence avec les Destinées. C'est à l'heure que nous sentans transportez d'une felicité si ecstatique, qu'elle pourroit passer pour un prelude de celle des bienheureux, nous mespriserons tout autre contentement que celui lequel nous sçaurons ainsi nous donner à nous-mesmes. (450)

Philosophical contemplation is the highest aim for humanity. When humans strive for gains other than the intellectual rewards they can achieve alone, the result is division and war (450-51), and this supports the possibility that Orontes believes the mind superior to the body, especially considering that Orontes considers contemplation of such questions as the immortality of the soul worthy, and observes with Plato that "la pluspart des biens du corps et de la fortune" are in opposition to "ceux de l'esprit" (451).

On the other hand, Orontes does not seem to believe that metaphysical issues such as the immortality of the soul are open to conclusive resolution. There are human limits to what one can know, and so despite the importance Orontes places in philosophical contemplation, he does not place undue pride in his intellectual acquisitions. Modesty is the rule:

Taschons, Telamon, d'estre de ce petit nombre des esleus, évitans autant que faire se peut cette envie et cette haine du reste des hommes dont parle Platon, en tenant nostre felicité cachée, et évitant sur toute chose cette ostentation odieuse de sçavoir plus que les autres. Contentons-nous de ce dont les autres font profession d'avoir des sciences certaines, de tesmoigner, si nous y sommes contraints, d'en posseder quelques legeres suspicions selon la portée de nostre humanité. (451)

This attitude softens the lavish praise for the human intellect that precedes it, and as if in recognition of this fact, Orontes closes the dialogue with a reminder that humanity consists in the body, as well: “Elle [nostre humanité] demande pour l’heure, ce me semble, que nous imitions ces animaux que je vois revenir vers nous [...] Allons donc chercher comme eux le repas, et le repos à couvert” (451). Orontes represents the philosopher who exalts in meditation but has the humility to recognize the deficiencies of his mental capabilities and the affinity that exists between human and animal nature in corporality.

In “De la Vie privée,” Hesychius and Philoponus take opposite sides of the debate over the preeminence of the mind. Hesychius, who wishes to defend a life of meditative seclusion, supposes the soul as the defining characteristic of humanity to make his point:

Et veritablement si nous ne sommes appelez hommes, que par cette partie superieure qui est en nous, et que nostre esprit estant nostre forme, soit celuy qui nous donne l'estre, il faut bien dire que ses fonctions et operations seront nos principales et plus importantes actions ; et partant qu'elles devront estre suivies de la gloire la plus solide, et de l'honneur du meilleur alloy qui se puisse trouver icy bas. (119-20)

Hesychius assumes an Aristotelian position and defines the mind as the supreme constituent of human nature, and he equates it to the human form. Given the supremacy of the mind, the

activities of the mind are humanity's supreme activity. Philoponus objects to Hesychius equation of humanity and spirituality, reminding him of the essential role that the body plays in human existence, which also serves his purpose of justifying a socially active life:

Mais puis que nous sommes un composé de deux parties, et que c'est l'union de l'ame et du corps, qui nous fait hommes, pourquoy denierons-nous les fonctions à l'une de ces deux moitiés ? [...] quand vous rendez vostre Philosophe si spirituel qu'il n'agist que par cette principale et superieure partie, vous ne vous appercevez pas qu'au lieu d'un homme vous en faites un phantosme, et que pour luy donner un estre parfaict, vous luy ostez le réel, ou du moins le raisonnable, pour le chimérique. (120)

From this standpoint, the idea that the mind defines humanity is the product of wishful thinking, the desire for an existence that surpasses materiality. This desire obstructs one from appreciating humankind's actual existence as mind and body working in unison under earthly conditions.¹³

The discussion between Hesychius and Philoponus is particularly remarkable because animals play no role in their argument although they treat the relative importance of mind and body.

Beyond the matter of the supremacy of the mind, is the immortality of the soul. This question occupies the dialecticians in "De l'Ignorance louable," who consider the various opinions revolving around the issue. Telamon is a supporter of the quest for knowledge through investigation of the physical world, by which one may gain insight into the nature of the soul:

Mais si de ces corps inanimez nous nous portons à luy demander raison de ceux qui possèdent quelqu'une des trois ames, vegetante, sensitive, ou raisonnable ; que nous nous facions expliquer quelles sont les puissances, facultez, et instrumens de chacune d'icelles ; comment la nature procede par degrez de l'une à l'autre, et par la liaison des Zoophytes et des Amphibies ; quels sont les sens, tant internes qu'externes de la sensitive ; quels l'intellect et la volonté de la raisonnable ; ce que nous pouvons dire humainement de son estat separé qui suppose son immortalité ; il n'y aura aucun de tous ces points sur lequel elle ne nous donne une telle satisfaction, et contentement d'esprit, qu'élevez au dessus de

¹³ Hesychius does not surrender his position so easily, however, later claiming that the resolution of a question such as the immortality of the soul and other philosophical delights to be beyond Philoponus' grasp, being comprehensible only to great philosophers who dedicate their lives to such study (143).

nostre condition humaine, nous n'aurons plus de goust que pour cette sorte de contemplation des choses physiques, et n'estimerons plus rien que la meditation de ces veritez eternelles. (254-55)

An examination of nature leads the philosopher to spiritual understanding, a state of beatitude from which he contemplates eternal truths, including those regarding the soul, though Telamon does not specify what they are. Although Telamon leaves the eternal truths of the soul unspoken, the speaker who follows him takes issue with his claim that they are knowable at all.

Granicus accepts the merit of the study of the physical world, but believes it less fruitful than Telamon's claims. In particular he attacks Telamon for asserting that the study of physics can resolve the question of the immortality of the soul. To support his position, he uses a tactic Montaigne employs in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," pointing to the multitude of divergent opinions among ancient philosophers: "Mais je veux bien insister contre vous sur ce que vous dites que la Physique vous rendra sçavans, et nous contentera en ce qui regarde l'immortalité de nos ames. Car comme elle ne traite aucune matiere plus importante que celle-là, aussi n'y en a-t'il point où ses professeurs se soient plus partagez" (263). Granicus offers Aristotle as a prime example of the confusion over the immortality of the soul. At times, he claims, Aristotle contradicts himself by stating in certain passages that the soul is immortal, but providing principles by which the soul must be mortal (263). An immortal soul predicated upon these principles necessitates either a universal soul or problematic transmigrations of the soul, according to Granicus (263). Furthermore, by Granicus' reasoning, Aristotle's definition of the soul is nonsensical if one considers the soul immortal:

Voire mesme la propre definition qu'Aristote donne de l'ame seroit tout à fait vicieuse, *anima est actus corporis organici* ; car si elle est immortelle, il s'ensuit qu'elle n'est conjointe au corps que par un temps de nulle consideration, eu esgard à l'eternité qu'elle demeurera separée, et par consequent cet estat de separation luy doit estre reputé naturel, et celuy de son information du corps accidentel ; or on n'a jamais ouy parler de definir par ce qui est accidentel et

contre nature ; et partant la definition d'Aristote demeureroit ridicule et insoustenable. (263-64)

In addition to discrediting Telamon's claim that the study of physics can resolve the question of the soul's immortality, Granicus' intent appears to be to move the discussion to the possibility of a mortal soul.

To make his point, Granicus cites the debate in Italy between Nifo and Pomponazzi. He believes that Nifo errs in taking up the challenge to contradict Pomponazzi's theory of a mortal soul to preserve church dogma. For one thing, the immortal soul is difficult to prove within the Peripatetic confines Nifo sets up for himself, as he has already demonstrated, and secondly, coming back to Granicus' point of departure, there are a great number of equal proofs for the mortality of the soul in ancient philosophy: "Niphus defendoit un party non seulement foible dans les limites du Peripatetisme qu'ils s'estoient prescrites, mais qui est mesme plein de dispute dans toute l'estenduë de la Philosophie" (264). Additionally, arguments for an immortal soul carry with them another difficult problem, the question of an immortal animal soul: "on ne peut apporter de raisons humaines si fortes pour l'immortalité de nostre ame, qui n'ayent leur revers, faisant autant pour l'immortalité de l'ame des brutes" (264). The implication is that by arguing for the immortality of the human soul, Nifo defeats the Christian cause he means to defend, since he provides argumentation for the cause of the immortal soul of animals, which is contrary to church dogma. Granicus' argument is the first instance of the rhetorical use of animals to question the immortality of the soul.

Granicus' response to Telamon shows a leaning towards the mortal soul. Reasons for the immortal soul are "balancées par d'autres raisons aussi puissantes" (264) from enough sources "pour embarasser tout esprit qui ne consultera que la Philosophie pour se resoudre sur ce point"

(265). More telling is his defense of the moral character of those in the past who have held the soul to be mortal:

Ce que je prononce d'autant plus hardiment, pour ce que non seulement hors le Christianisme il y a eu des plus grands hommes, et des plus gens de bien, à parler moralement, qui ont creu l'ame mortelle, comme Simonides, Homere, Hippocrate, Galien, Alexandre Aphrodisien, le grand Alpharabus, Abudacer, Avempace, Pline, Seneque, Cassius avec tous les Epicuriens, les Saduccens mesmes en la loy de Moyse [...] et assez d'autre personnages de tresgrande reputation... (265)

The implication here is that there is no need to associate the belief in a mortal soul with immorality, and therefore it is acceptable to hold this belief. Nonetheless Granicus' intent in making an argument for the morality of the mortal soul might just as easily be to reveal the danger in attempting to use philosophy to prove religious truths: "c'est faire tort au Christianisme, de l'autoriser, et avec luy l'immortalité de l'ame, sur des opinions humaines prises de la Philosophie" (265). For Granicus, as for Montaigne, religious truths are a matter of faith: "nous devons tenir cela [the immortality of the soul] de la foy, dans laquelle tout doit estre certain. Car pourquoy cet article de l'immortalité de l'ame ne sera-t'il pas aussi constant par la foy Chrestienne, et ne despendra-t'il pas d'elle aussi bien que ceux de la Trinité, de l'Incarnation, et de la Resurrection ?" (265). Granicus here presents another slippery slope, if there is need to prove the immortal soul, why not these other tenets of Christianity all the more difficult to prove by human reasoning? Holding the immortal soul the standard of rational proof risks toppling all the major metaphysical claims of the Christian religion.

The debate between Telamon and Granicus illustrates the tension between the desire to found all beliefs with empirical reasons and the traditional position of accepting religious truths on faith. Telamon imagines a harmony between religious truth and empirical reasoning, while Granicus believes such a harmony to be impossible since what philosophy has done with available empirical evidence demonstrates a failure to resolve certain religious questions such as

the nature of the soul. Animals play only a secondary role in the discussion; Granicus resorts to their use on only one occasion and after offering other arguments against the immortal soul.

Other passages in “De l’Ignorance louable” have some bearing on future discussions of the immortality of the soul. Orasius criticizes the practice of metaphysics, noting that no philosopher has ever held there to be anything immaterial in the universe:

...la Metaphysique [...] ne sera que de petite ou nulle consideration à ceux qui traiteront la Physique comme il faut, et qui luy sçauroit donner sa juste estenduë, n’y ayant peut-estre rien en la Philosophie au delà de la Physique, non seulement à l’égard des plus anciens Philosophes, qui n’admettoient aucunes substances immateriales, comme tesmoigne Aristote, et des Epicuriens et Stoïciens, tels que ce Basilides, dont parle nostre Sextus, lequel soustenoit qu’il n’y avoit rien d’incorporel, mais à l’égard d’Aristote mesme, puis qu’il n’a pas moins reconnu le premier moteur dans ses livres Acroamatiques de la Nature, que dans ceux qui ont receu hazardeusement le nom de Metaphysiques. (231)

Orasius goes on to remark the importance that Aristotle places on the study of physics in order to underline the importance of the material world. Unlike Telamon, however, Orasius does not place undue importance on its study.

Orasius’ stance against his adversary, who reveres the intellect, also has bearing on arguments later in the century over animal nature. Telamon claims that humans distinguish themselves from animals by the acquisition of knowledge (219). While Orasius disagrees, he does believe that humans distinguish themselves from animals by their intellects:

La science, dites-vous, est le propre de l’homme, et celle seule qui nous distingue du reste des animaux ; et moy je vous soustiens avec le mesme Aristote, qu’elle est le propre de Dieu seul, adjoustant que l’ignorance Sceptique sera bien mieux prise pour nous faire differer des autres animaux, qui ne sçavent pas qu’ils ignorent, ny mesme que c’est que cette louable ignorance. (224)

According to Orasius, animals are not cognizant of what they do not know, in which they differ from humans. Orasius places limits on the human intellect, however, when he draws a separating line between God and humanity. He adopts the Montaignian position that knowledge

is for God alone, describing a profound gulf between human nature and the divine: “Et à la verité les Philosophes ont bien definy l’homme par capable de raison ou de discours, mais non pas de science, laquelle n’estant que des choses universelles et infaillibles [...] n’a nulle convenance avec nostre nature singuliere et caduque, tant s’en faut qu’elle puisse entrer en sa definition comme son propre” (224). Orasius implies the mortality of humanity and it follows from his position on metaphysics that, at any rate, questions surrounding the immortality or immateriality of the soul are beyond human means to know.

Just as it is impossible to attribute a particular stance regarding human and animal nature to La Mothe Le Vayer based on the attitudes present in the *Dialogues*, any attempt to ascertain La Mothe Le Vayer’s beliefs concerning the soul from the text is untenable. Isabelle Moreau, however, gives a summary of La Mothe Le Vayer’s conclusions on the immortality of the soul, which she bases on his entire corpus, that highlights the weakness of the position: “l’immortalité de l’âme est la chose la plus universellement, religieusement et plausiblement reçue par tout le monde, le plus utilement crue, la plus faiblement prouvée et établie par raisons et moyens humains” (GS 564). Although the *Dialogues* predate the Gassendi-Descartes controversy, his later works lead Philippe-Joseph Salazar to conclude that La Mothe Le Vayer holds “mépris” for “la doctrine de l’animal-machine.” Salazar cites the ethical consequences of the animal-machine as the source of La Mothe Le Vayer’s disapproval, as an abuse of power over animals may transfer to humans (48). This is similar to one of the lessons of Montaigne’s “De La Cruauté,” that violence against animals increases the likelihood of violence against humans.

Regardless of La Mothe Le Vayer’s personal position, his *Dialogues* prove that in the time preceding the Gassendi-Descartes controversy, the question of animal nature was not integral to discussions of the nature of the human soul. If the *Dialogues* are a just indication, the

question of faith was just as important to discourse on the soul. Still, the fact that animal nature does have its part in the *Dialogues* sheds light on Descartes's attack on belief in the animal soul in his *Discours de la méthode* and the ensuing debate with Gassendi in which animals play such an important role.

Conclusion

La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens* is laced with the skeptical attitude that questions human supremacy over animals and the border between humans and animals, touching on areas of great concern in future debates such as animal reasoning ability and the nature of the animal soul. Skepticism is the prevalent context of matters concerning the relationship of animal and human nature, but the dialogue format of La Mothe Le Vayer's text allows him to develop a wide variety of intelligent opinions within skepticism, but also from a broader base. Although he speaks specifically of the second collection of dialogues, Pintard describes La Mothe Le Vayer as "le sectateur de Pyrrhon et de Lucrèce, de Sextus Empiricus, de Sénèque et de Zénon" (512), acknowledging thereby skeptic, Epicurean, and Stoic influences. In addition, Jean-Pierre Cavaillé notes that in La Mothe Le Vayer's writings under the pseudonym Orasius Tubero skepticism itself is in doubt: "Si le pyrrhonisme est lui-même affecté par le soupçon, si ses concepts fondamentaux et ses procédures propres sont pervertis, c'est de l'intérieur même, comme si le discours sceptique était rongé par le ver de la licence et la dérision" (184). A dialectician such as Telamon is not a paper tiger that the author employs as a foil to demonstrate the superiority of skeptical thought. Far from parroting conventional argumentation, he expresses thoughtful and original argument for his case, often as witty as his adversaries', while exhibiting some skeptical tendencies himself.

The overall character of the text is, however, skeptical with regard to the issues enumerated above. From this position, the possibility of knowing anything with certainty is in question: the facetious and outrageous nature of many of the *Dialogues* arguments illustrates this point, and such metaphysical matters as the immortality of the soul are definitely beyond human ken. An important aspect of the skeptical procedure is the exposition of the fallaciousness of claims to certain knowledge. The debunking of human superiority over animals and the preeminence of reason that often founds it are a traditional part of this procedure, for instance, in Sextus Empiricus and Montaigne. Granicus sums up the skeptical position on human superiority as it applies to animals in “De l’Ignorance louable”:

Je ne m’arresteray point non plus sur ce que tous les hommes conviennent quasi avec les Stoïciens, à se persuader que ce monde n’est fait que pour eux, et que particulièrement ils sont maîtres de la vie de tous les autres animaux, desquels ils se nourrissent, comme les chats, peut estre, se persuadent que Dieu n’a créé les rats et les souris que pour les engraisser ; les Pythagoriens avec les Epicuriens ayant soustenu le contraire, et que nous n’avions nulle legitime juridiction sur le reste des animaux. (262-63)

That human opinions on the matter differ is evidence that human superiority is unfounded and even impossible to ground. Ultimately, one cannot know the essence of humanity or animality, but resemblances point to an affinity of nature and equality that aligns La Mothe Le Vayer with Montaigne.

CHAPTER 3: DESCARTES'S ANIMAL-MACHINE

In contrast to the common nature that both La Mothe Le Vayer and Montaigne attribute to animals and humans, Descartes conceives of a human nature distinct from that of other living creatures. The crux of this distinction is human rationality, which Descartes endeavors to show is exclusive to humanity. Descartes ties this uniquely human characteristic to the possession of an immaterial soul, thereby creating a clear marker of human difference with demonstrable consequences. Only an immaterial soul thinks, and language, as Descartes defines it, proves the occurrence of the rational thought attributable to the possession of an immaterial soul in humans. Animals do not demonstrate the use of language and therefore lack reasoning ability and its attendant soul. While La Mothe Le Vayer and Montaigne employ comparisons between humans and animals as a rhetorical device to combat human pretentiousness, Descartes's focus is on establishing a difference in nature between humans and animals in order to preserve the integrity of humankind's immaterial and immortal rational soul. This shift of focus continues in Gassendi's rejection of Descartes's philosophy in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*, in which Gassendi uses animals to counter Descartes. Later discussions on the immortality and immateriality of the soul in French literature invite the inclusion of animal examples.

Distinguishing Humans from Animals in the *Discours de la méthode*

Descartes's discussion of animals in the *Discours de la méthode* serves the primary purpose of distinguishing humans from animals. This distinction is highly important for Descartes because the belief that animals and humans are of a common nature is an error with dire theological consequences. If human and animal nature are the same, then there is no reason

to believe that human and animal souls differ. According to Descartes, if this is the case then there is then no reason to believe that humans have an immortal soul: “après l’erreur de ceux qui nient Dieu[...] il n’y en a point qui éloigne plutôt les esprits faibles du droit chemin de la vertu, que d’imaginer que l’âme des bêtes soit de même nature que la nôtre, et que, par conséquent, nous n’avons rien à craindre, ni à espérer, après cette vie, non plus que les mouches et les fourmis” (V 124-25). Thierry Gontier inscribes Descartes’s fear in a tradition including both classical and Renaissance authors whose influence determines the context in which Descartes reacts to Montaigne: “Le contexte dominant dans lequel Descartes lit Montaigne le porte ainsi à voir dans le discours sur les animaux de *l’Apologie de Raimond Sebond* non une simple critique de l’orgueil anthropocentrique, mais le germe d’une *psychologie matérialiste* destructrice du dogme de l’immortalité de l’âme humaine” (193-94). In the citation above, Descartes overlooks the possibility that both humans and animals might have immortal souls, a possibility, however, that his previous discussion of the nature of animals also shows to be false as it demonstrates a clear distinction between human and animal nature.

Descartes’s own understanding of human nature invites comparisons between humans and animals, and offers the perfect opportunity for him to address the distinction between the two. Descartes compares the human body to “une machine qui, ayant été faite des mains de Dieu, est incomparablement mieux ordonnée, et a en soi des mouvements plus admirables, qu’aucune de celles qui peuvent être inventées par les hommes” (V 120). Animal bodies, too, are like machines, but there is a significant difference between humans and animals in this respect. If there was an actual machine that mimicked perfectly the construction of an animal body — Descartes uses the example of a monkey — there would be no way to distinguish the machine from the real animal. As Descartes puts it, one could not tell that the machine was not

“tout de même nature” as the animal (V 120). In essence, he is saying that the body of the animal along with its workings and the nature of the animal are one and the same. He likely chooses a monkey for his example to underscore the fact that this is true for all animals, even those that may appear to be intelligent. For Descartes, animals are not intelligent, rational creatures. He makes this point to establish a difference between animals and humans.

The Lack of Animal Language as Indication of the Lack of Animal Rationality

To demonstrate the difference between human and animal nature, Descartes turns to a mechanical replica of the human body. In this case, one can distinguish the machine from the real human by either of two means. The first is by invoking the machine to speak. A mechanical replica is unable to “arrange[r] diversement” words “pour répondre au sens de tout ce qui se dira en sa présence” (V 121). A machine cannot converse with another rational being, even though it may be able to “profère des paroles” and to the extent that its utterances correspond to “des actions corporelles qui causeront quelque changement en ses organes” (V 121). A mechanical replica of a human being lacks language.

The machine’s abilities and limitations correspond to the abilities and limitations of animals. Descartes notes that parakeets and magpies can pronounce words, for instance, but that they are incapable of engaging in conversation (V 122). Keith Gunderson argues in his paper on the subject, “Descartes, La Mettrie, Language, and Machines,” that Descartes gives an effective argument against Montaigne’s proposal that from like behavior one must conclude like faculties. In fact, Descartes responds to Montaigne’s challenge to provide reasons to conclude otherwise, and Gunderson backs Descartes’s view that one cannot conclude from isolated instances, such as the speech of a parrot, that animals reason or use language as humans do. In effect, Gunderson

claims that Montaigne's argument that from like effect we must conclude like cause is unsound in cases involving human intelligence, and uses the case of computer calculations to make his point. What Gunderson apparently neglects is that Montaigne believes that one should conclude an effect from like cause when there is no evidence to do otherwise. Gunderson's computer calculations provide him with evidence to which Montaigne did not have access and it is impossible to know how he would react to Gunderson's arguments.

For Descartes, animals are unable to do what nearly any human can do, namely, "arranger ensemble diverses paroles, et d'en composer un discours par lequel ils fassent entendre leurs pensées" (V 122). Magpies and parakeets cannot use language even though they have vocal organs capable of articulating human language, which Descartes offers as proof of their lack of rationality (V 122). In the case of other animals, were they rational, they would at least be able to communicate their thoughts via signs as the case of human deaf-mutes illustrates (V 122). Since no animals do so, this is proof that they have no thoughts to communicate, evidence "pas seulement que les bêtes ont moins de raison que les hommes, mais qu'elles n'en ont point du tout" (V 122-23). Like a machine, animals are unthinking, and since they have no thoughts to communicate, they cannot use language.

Descartes responds to two misconceptions concerning the possibility of animal language. The first is that the cries and calls of animals constitute language. What seems to distinguish animal cries from language is the fact that a machine could duplicate them: "on ne doit pas confondre les paroles avec les mouvements naturels, qui témoignent les passions, et peuvent être imités par des machines aussi bien que par les animaux" (V 123). These cries are not a communication of thought, but rather reactions resulting from the passions, which do not qualify as thought.

The second misconception is that animals have their own languages, but that humans are unable to understand them. Descartes specifically criticizes following the lead of “quelques anciens” in this regard (V 123). R.W. Serjeantson believes that this warning against believing that animals speak although we do not understand their language is directed against Montaigne and Charron (437). The fact that animals such as magpies and parakeets have vocal organs capable of articulating human speech nullifies this belief, “car s’il était vrai, puisqu’elles ont plusieurs organes qui se rapportent aux nôtres, elles pourraient aussi bien se faire entendre à nous qu’à leurs semblables” (V 123). If a magpie language did exist, it would mean that magpies are capable of thought. Since magpies can articulate human speech, they would be able to use human words to communicate their thoughts. That they do not, as Descartes shows previously, is proof that they do not think.

Descartes’s responses to each of the misconceptions he addresses highlight animals’ lack of rationality. It is true that animals emit cries and calls of various sorts, but these are not properly words, and they do not communicate thoughts. They, therefore, do not require the influence of a rational soul. The inability of animals like magpies and parakeets to use human speech precludes the existence of their own animal languages, since it demonstrates their lack of thought. Since they do not think, they have no rational soul. This is the difference between humans and animals that a lack of language brings to light. Descartes again resorts to the examples of monkeys and parakeets to illustrate this difference. Even a child can use language, while even the most perfect of monkeys and parakeets cannot, a fact which argues for a soul “du tout différente” in nature from the human soul (V 123). Animals do not have a rational, immortal soul, but the purpose of Descartes’s arguments goes beyond this conclusion. What is

most important for Descartes is its implication. Humans possess something that animals do not, therefore they are fundamentally different from animals.

Other Animal Behaviors as Indication of the Lack of Animal Rationality

The second means of distinguishing a mechanical replica of a human being from a real one is to remark the diversity of its abilities. Whereas humans are able to adapt to a widely diverse set of circumstances and engage in suitable behaviors to meet their needs, a machine is capable of only a finite number of activities in response to a limited number of stimuli “bien qu’elles fissent plusieurs choses aussi bien ou peut-être mieux qu’aucun de nous” (V 121). Excellence in one or even several abilities does not mean that a machine is of the same nature as a human being. The limitation of machines shows, in fact, that they act “pas par connaissance, mais seulement par la disposition de leurs organes” (V 123). The reason this is so is because a machine cannot possibly be of a complexity that can account for the diversity of human behavior that results from rationality:

Car au lieu que la raison est un instrument universel, qui peut servir en toutes sortes de rencontres, ces organes ont besoin de quelque particulière disposition pour chaque action particulière ; d’où vient qu’il est moralement impossible qu’il y en ait assez de divers en une machine pour la faire agir en toutes les occurrences de la vie, de même façon que notre raison nous fait agir. (V 121-22)

Descartes cannot imagine the possibility of a machine in human form that could contain all the necessary mechanisms to account for the nearly infinite diversity of human action.

As in the case of the inability of machines to use language, their behavioral limits apply directly to the case of animals. Just as the excellence of a machine in particular abilities does not indicate that it is of the same nature as a human being, the excellence of animals in certain domains does not mean they are of the same nature as humans. The reason is the same lack of

diversity in their behaviors. The same animal that exhibits a skill surpassing human ability in one domain “n’en témoignent point du tout en beaucoup d’autres” (V 123). The absence of skill in a large number of areas demonstrates that animals do not have intelligence equal to or greater than humans, as their skill in particular cases might imply, but “plutôt qu’ils n’en ont point” (V 124).

Descartes invokes a different kind of machine to explain the special abilities of animals, a clock: “c’est la nature qui agit en eux, selon la disposition de leurs organes : ainsi qu’on voit qu’un horloge, qui n’est composé que de roues et de ressorts, peut compter les heures, et mesurer le temps, plus justement que nous avec toute notre prudence” (V 124). The nature of animals is to act according to the disposition of their bodily organs, just as the nature of a clock is to measure out time according to its mechanical construction. Obviously, the movements of a clock do not necessitate its having a rational soul. Thierry Gontier characterizes the difference between the apparent reason in animal behavior and human behavior as a difference between external and internal intelligence. A human’s behavior results from his own reasoning ability, while the animal’s behavior is directed by God: “Pour Descartes...la sagesse n’est pas absente des œuvres des animaux, mais elle est à rapporter à l’intelligence divine” (227). Accordingly, the behavior of animals, even those that surpass human abilities, are not contingent upon a rational soul. The entirety of Descartes’s arguments against a reasoning animal has the sole purpose of drawing a clear line between humans and animals. Defining animal nature is merely a rhetorical device to establish a human nature that is distinct from that of other beings.

Descartes’s Animal vs. Montaigne’s Animal

Unlike Montaigne's animal, Descartes's does not use language. The essential difference is in Descartes's definition of language. Montaigne applies the appellation language to forms of communication that Descartes disallows. Descartes limits the bounds of language to what he believes exclusive to humans, the expression of rational thought, by discounting animal vocalizations and gestures as mechanical reactions. Melehy demonstrates that this conception of language is of primary importance to the project of divesting animals of reason and thereby creating a dividing line between humans and animals in his paper "Silencing the Animals: Montaigne, Descartes, and the Hyperbole of Reason." Animal cries that communicate the passions or bodily signs that do the same constitute language for Montaigne, but for Descartes they do not, since there is no evidence that they communicate thought. Animal behavior is such that it would be difficult for Descartes to deny that communication takes place between animals and between animals and humans as Montaigne describes it in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," but Descartes denies that conversation in which two beings respond to one another's thoughts is taking place.

Animal thought is the real issue for Descartes, since thinking entails the possession of a rational soul. Montaigne, on the other hand, does not concern himself with the mental activity behind animal language, which he believes beyond human ability to uncover, but only with the indication that communication is taking place. Animal communication need not be precisely identical to human forms in order to qualify as language. For Montaigne, the difference between human and animal communication is one of degree, for Descartes human language is of a completely different order than any animal communication taking place, even that which they share with humans, e.g. vocal emissions that communicate the passions.

As far as the animal behaviors that surpass human abilities, Montaigne treats these activities in his “Apologie” as signs of animal reasoning ability. Montaigne’s examples include the nest-building of swallows and the web construction of spiders, specialized behaviors. Descartes shows that an intricate machine could accomplish these same sorts of specialized activities, and so behavior such as the swallow’s nest construction does not indicate a reasoning animal. For Montaigne, animals are reasoning beings, but differ from humans only in the ways and the extent to which they use their reasoning ability. Descartes, on the other hand, divests animals of all reason, creating a hard line between humans and animals, between rational and irrational beings. For Michael Miller this is the whole point of Descartes’s criteria for reasoning ability, to exclude the possibility of rational animals (355-57). Furthermore, Descartes states “that there are no varying degrees or varying uses of rationality” (358), which automatically biases his reasoning ability criteria against animals. They must reason as humans do in human circumstances to be considered rational. Animals’ material bodies account for the entirety of their behavior, whereas humans have a rational soul, a thinking substance, that manifests in thought and accounts for such things as language and complex behaviors beyond the capabilities of even the most intricate machines.

Both Montaigne and Descartes use animals as a rhetorical device to situate humanity, but Montaigne brings humans down to the level of animals whereas Descartes cleanly separates humans from animals on the basis of possessing an immaterial, rational soul.

Animals in the Objections to Descartes’s *Méditations*

Descartes’s conception of animals presents difficulties to several parties, and he responds to their objections in supplements at the end of the text. Antoine Arnauld, whose

queries comprise the fourth objections, shows reservations about the diminished existence of animals that Descartes' philosophy dictates. Arnauld couples this reservation with another concerning the nature of human beings.

Arnauld's doubts concerning Descartes's human nature actually stem from a misunderstanding, but they have bearing on the nature of animals, since when Descartes clarifies his position he validates human corporality, a feature humans share with animals. Arnauld's concern is that Descartes limits humanity to an immaterial thinking substance that merely uses the body as a vessel. The mind is distinct from the body, but neither part constitutes a human being in its entirety, only the two together are human:

...car je ne pense pas que, pour montrer qu'une chose est réellement distincte d'une autre, on puisse rien dire de moins, sinon que par la toute-puissance de Dieu elle en peut être séparée ; et il m'a semblé que j'avais pris garde assez soigneusement à ce que personne ne pût pour cela penser *que l'homme n'est rien qu'un esprit usant ou se servant du corps*.¹⁴ (205)

The mind is "substantiellement uni" to the body, and a human being is the conjunction of the two (205).

This leads into Arnauld's question about the nature of animals, since Descartes is acknowledging that the body is an essential part of humanity. Arnauld questions the possibility of a soulless animal. Descartes is unable to entertain the possibility that a machine could exist that would duplicate human behavior; it seems that Arnauld remains skeptical about the possibility of a machine that can duplicate even animal behavior. The problem lies in the similarities between human and animal behavior, which Descartes turns in his favor. Descartes never attempts to deny the similarity between humans and animals, but only, as Derrida states it "le jugement ou l'opinion qu'elle [la ressemblance] induit" that there exists "la présence, chez

¹⁴ The italicized portion of the text refers to Arnauld's objection.

l'animal, d'une âme, de sentiments et de passions comme les nôtres" (113). The body is an essential part of human nature, and even some human behaviors do not depend on the possession of a rational mind. Descartes provides a list of autonomic activities such as the beating of the heart to less obvious examples such as walking and even singing, which can be done without thinking (207). Consistent with his description of animal behavior in the *Discours*, to which he refers Arnauld, behaviors under the control of the body are those where no thought takes place. The fact that no thought takes place during these activities is something that humans can individually experience, and given the similarity between the human and animal body, and between certain human and animal behaviors, there is no reason to believe that animals reason during these behaviors any more than humans do (207).

Arnauld proposes a particular case to exemplify the difficulty of explaining all animal behavior by unthinking bodily reactions, a sheep that takes flight at the sight of a wolf. Descartes places this action in the same category as the throwing of the hands in front of the body in order to protect the head by people who fall from a height: "ce n'est point par le conseil de leur raison qu'ils font cette action ; et elle ne dépend point de leur esprit, mais seulement de ce que leurs sens, étant touchés par le danger présent, causent quelque changement en leur cerveau" (207). An inevitable chain of events leads to an act of self-preservation "sans que l'esprit le puisse empêcher" (207). By making comparisons between human and animal behavior, Descartes is able to effectively argue for an irrational animal, and in such a way that he refutes Arnauld's example: "Or, puisque nous expérimentons cela en nous-mêmes, pourquoi nous étonnerons-nous tant, si la lumière réfléchie du corps du loup dans les yeux de la brebis a la même force pour exciter en elle le mouvement de la fuite ?" (207). Arnauld states that he finds it "incroyable" that a sheep fleeing from a wolf could occur without the intervention of a soul

(207), but if he accepts Descartes proposition that similar human acts of self-preservation take place without thought, he at least has significantly less cause for disbelief.

Descartes concludes his responses to the objections of Arnauld concerning the absence of an animal soul by again referring him to the *Discours* where he specifically treats the topic of animal nature and how it differs from human nature. He also takes the opportunity to reiterate the conclusion he reaches in that text, thereby blanketing all animal behavior and not just Arnauld's specific example: "toutes les actions des bêtes sont seulement semblables à celles que nous faisons sans que notre esprit y contribue" (208). The difficulty as Descartes sees it is that there are so many human behaviors that overlap with animals': "voyant que l'un, qui dépend seulement des esprits animaux et des organes, est dans les bêtes aussi bien que dans nous, nous avons cru inconsidérément que l'autre, qui dépend de l'esprit et de la pensée, était aussi en elles" (208). The mistake is natural, but Descartes believes that all one need do to verify that animals are not rational is apply the criteria for rational behavior that he outlines in the *Discours*.

Arnauld's objections specifically concern the nature of animals that Descartes establishes, and Descartes must respond because his conception of animal nature is a necessary support for his conclusions about human nature.

Arnauld is not alone in his skepticism. The question of an animal soul and animal thinking ability recurs under the banner of various theologians and philosophers who also have trouble believing that mechanical explanations can account for all animal behavior. In addition, Descartes's objectors pose the possibility of a material animal soul capable of thought to construct a more credible animal. Descartes is willing to hypothetically assume the possibility of an animal reasoning soul, but not a material one. If animals think, then they must possess a rational soul distinct from the body: "Pour ce qui est des chiens et des singes, quand je leur

attribuerais la pensée, il ne s'ensuivrait pas de là que l'âme humaine n'est point distincte du corps, mais plutôt que dans les autres animaux les esprits et les corps sont aussi distingués" (273). Descartes sees the danger inherent in accepting the possibility of a material animal soul capable of thought. If matter is capable of thought, then why not in the case of humans, as well? Thought can only occur where there is an immaterial thinking substance, which animals would also possess if they did think. The point is moot, however, since Descartes claims to have proven that they do not.

Descartes maintains that animals do not think in his responses to the sixth objections and remarks on the fact that he provides adequate reason for his position: "je n'ai pas seulement dit que dans les bêtes il n'y avait point de pensée, ainsi qu'on me veut faire accroire, mais qui plus est je l'ai prouvé par des raisons qui sont si fortes que jusqu'à présent je n'ai vu personne qui ait rien opposé de considérable à l'encontre" (273). The weakness in the beliefs of those that support animal thought is that they do not give demonstrations of animal thinking ability using criteria as exacting as Descartes's own, but rather assume animal thought without adequate cause. As Descartes has shown, shared behaviors do not prove that both animals and humans think, for humans sometimes act without thinking themselves. Those that argue for animal thought are victims of their imaginations, they speak "comme s'ils étaient d'intelligence" with the animals they observe "et qu'ils vissent tout ce qui se passe dans leurs cœurs, lesquels ne prouvent rien de ce qu'ils disent" (274). Descartes will only accept as proof of animal reasoning two things, neither of which he believes possible, an animal who uses language according to the standards he sets in the *Discours*, or examples of animal behavior that he cannot explain by mechanical processes. Michael Miller remarks Descartes's confidence on this point in his paper "Descartes' Distinction Between Animals and Humans": "since Descartes believes that no

animal could ever make an appropriate utterance or sign which expresses a pure thought, that is, a mental state which cannot ultimately be traced back to a sensible desire of the body, he is confident that the utterances of animals will never qualify as real communication” (353). Like Montaigne, Descartes believes the inner life of animals to be beyond human experience, though he differs from Montaigne in that he reaches a different conclusion about animal reasoning ability. This is because Montaigne’s conclusion in favor of a reasoning animal is contingent upon a lack of evidence demonstrating that animals do not think, and Descartes believes that his arguments in the *Discours* respond to this lack of evidence.

One of the objectors finds the idea of an unthinking animal impossible and ridiculous and Descartes surmises that objections of this sort amount to little more than mockery of a novel idea. This ridicule stems in part from an inability to believe that the complex actions of an animal could be mere mechanical reactions to external stimuli. That animals could be machines rests upon the excellence of divine intelligence, capable of producing machines inconceivable for the human intellect. Thierry Gontier summarizes Descartes’ position: “Si la différence entre la nature et l’art n’est qu’une différence de complication par le nombre et la taille des parties, cette différence peut alors être ‘comblée’ par la puissance divine.” (208) As Gontier later points out, God’s ability to create a machine of such complexity only confirms its possibility, not its necessity (214). Descartes notes that many proposals that at first seemed ridiculous, as his animal-machine appears to some, later proved to be true (274). The fact that an animal-machine is an innovative take on animal nature, and as such, liable to induce mockery, is no argument against it, or as Descartes expresses it: “ne doit pas passer pour une preuve” (274).

A more serious argument against the animal-machine is the similarity between human and animal behavior. In the case of the sixth objections, the argument against the animal-

machine is made on the basis of the hypothetical acceptance of the animal-machine, the similarity between human and animal behavior, and the resulting conclusion that humans, like animals, are merely machines. This conclusion would be as devastating for the immortal human soul as the one Descartes fears, that animals possess a reasoning soul as humans do. What the objection exposes is that any conclusion for a nature shared by humans and animals poses a threat to belief in an immortal soul. But Descartes rejects the shared nature of humans and animals, and dismisses the possibility of a human-machine that one of his objectors raises. As noted above, for Descartes the mental experience of animals is beyond human perception, but this is not the case when it comes to human mental experience: “Car de vrai il ne se peut pas faire que nous expérimentions tous les jours en nous-mêmes que nous pensons” (274).

Objections based on the possibility of a human-machine are invalid because human thought is self-evident and established with certainty as part of Descartes’s method. Thus, Descartes’s main response to conclusions in favor of a human-machine is to point out that those who would make this conclusion fail to follow his method faithfully or at least follow it unsuccessfully.

The first step of Descartes’ method is to rid oneself of prejudices. Descartes’s objectors fail to do so, and this impedes them from seeing the truth. They hold on to their old ways of thinking at all costs. The prejudice in this case is that humans and animals “opèrent de même façon,” which leads them to the impossible position of a human-machine: “il y a des hommes qui conçoivent les choses si confusément, et qui s’attachent avec tant d’opiniâtreté aux premières opinions qu’ils ont une fois conçues, sans les avoir jamais bien examinées, que plutôt que de s’en départir ils nieront qu’ils aient en eux-mêmes les choses qu’ils expérimentent y être” (274). This sort of objector denies his own thought to preserve his prejudice concerning the relationship of

humans and animals: “Descartes l’affirme à tous ses interlocuteurs : la croyance en l’âme des bêtes ne repose sur rien d’autre qu’un *préjugé*” (Gontier 263).

Descartes finds unlikely the possibility that there are a significant number of individuals capable of denying their own thought, but recognizes the existence of the more likely opponent who maintains the physicality of the soul and its mental functions along with a common nature belonging to both humans and animals. Descartes finds their position reasonable, when one grants the physicality of the soul. Given this possibility it is not irrational to assume that since animal “mouvements corporels” are like humans’ that the two are of the same nature (275). These same objectors to the unthinking animal account for differences between human and capabilities by citing a difference “selon le plus ou le moins” that “ne change point la nature des choses” (275).¹⁵ If one accepts these premises then one has “occasion de croire” that animals have “esprits de semblable espèce que les nôtres” (275).

Descartes does not refute the corporality of the soul and its mental functions in his responses to the sixth objections, but from his discussion of his method in the *Discours* and his exposition of the metaphysical truths he discovers via the method in the *Méditations*, one point Descartes surely does not concede to his opponents is the materiality of the soul. The immateriality of the soul negates any consequence for Descartes should he concede that differences in degree do not necessarily indicate different natures. Descartes makes the reasoning substance separate from the body, and details his reasons for excluding this substance from animal nature in the *Discours*. That is to say, there can be no separation by degrees between human and animal reasoning, because animals are incapable of any thought at all.

¹⁵ The reader can compare this with Montaigne’s “Apologie” where he writes, “Il y a quelque difference, il y a des ordres et des degrez ; mais c’est sous le visage d’une mesme nature” (459). It appears that Descartes is specifically targeting Montaigne’s admirers.

Descartes defends his animal-machine to defend an immaterial, rational soul exclusive to humans.

Descartes's responses to Pierre Gassendi's objections, the fifth, surprisingly contain little mention of animals, but they are important because they foreshadow the controversy in which the question of the soul of animals plays an important part which develops between the two following the publication of the *Méditations*. Gassendi refers to Descartes as "Mens" in his objections, chiding him for the overly important place he allots to the mind. Descartes counters by referring to Gassendi as "Caro," a means of reaffirming his position on the mind and accusing Gassendi of placing too much importance in the body. The division accurately portrays the nature of the conflict between the two philosophers. Gassendi refers Descartes to the senses and the body as necessary components of thought, while Descartes restates his position that the mind exists independently of matter.

Descartes uses both the terms "esprit" and "âme" to refer to the human thinking substance. Gassendi objects to the use of the word "âme" to describe something purely spiritual, claiming that the soul has physical functions as well. Descartes recognizes that the problem is just a matter of definition, which he attempts to rectify. He claims that Gassendi's understanding of what the soul is, while conventional, is in fact an error. The error stems from the ignorance of those who chose the broader signification of the word soul, who made no distinction between "ce principe par lequel nous sommes nourris, nous croissons et faisons sans la pensée toutes les autres fonctions qui nous sont communes avec les bêtes" and "celui par lequel nous pensons" (231). Later, Descartes hypothesizes, becoming aware of the distinction between mental and corporeal functions, "ils ont appelé du nom d'*esprit* cette chose qui en nous a la faculté de penser, et ont cru que c'était la principale partie de l'âme" (231). This way of looking at things

while acknowledging the difference between mental and physical operations preserves the original error of understanding two distinct things as parts of the same thing.

Descartes's solution to the problem is to apply the word soul only to that part of a human being which thinks, though he acknowledges the problem of a pre-existing definition of the word. Soul is an ambiguous word, "pour le prendre pour ce premier acte, ou cette *forme principale de l'homme*, il doit être seulement entendu de ce principe par lequel nous pensons" (231). Since the word soul implies the essential part of humanity, using it to refer to the mind is preferable. Descartes claims that he uses most often the word "esprit" to avoid ambiguity, but he makes his position clear when he states his own understanding of the relationship of mind and soul: "je ne considère pas l'*esprit* comme une partie de l'âme, mais comme cette âme toute entière qui pense" (231).

The nature of the soul is the subject of debate between Gassendi and Descartes in the *Méditations*, indication that questions about the soul are the primary source of their ensuing quarrel. In the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*, which documents Gassendi's quarrel with Descartes over the *Méditations*, Gassendi uses animals to counter Descartes's proofs for the immateriality of the soul. Gassendi's objections along with Descartes's responses in the *Méditations* support the rhetorical interpretation of Gassendi's use of animals in the *Disquisitio*.

The Letter to the Marquess of Newcastle

Descartes's letter of November 23rd, 1646 to the Marquess of Newcastle shows that nearly ten years after the publication of the *Discours*, the nature of the soul was still of primary importance to him when discussing animal nature. The letter is further evidence that Descartes's discussion of animals in the *Discours* is primarily a rhetorical device to elucidate the nature of

the human soul and the superiority of humanity. It also gives the reader an idea of the continuing influence of Montaigne and Charron on the subject of animal rationality, since Descartes specifically mentions them by name in defense of his position. He sets himself in opposition to Montaigne and Charron on a single front, that of animal “entendement” or “pensée” (Æ1254). He refuses to engage the criticism of anthropocentrism that is central to Montaigne’s discussion of animal nature, and implies that he finds no fault with it: “Ce n’est pas que je m’arrête à ce qu’on dit, que les hommes ont un empire absolu sur tous les autres animaux ; car j’avoue qu’il y en a de plus forts que nous, et croit qu’il y en peut aussi avoir qui aient des ruses naturelles, capable de tromper les hommes les plus fins” (Æ1254).

In reality, Descartes’s admission of animal worth is a token concession, for he is leading up to an argument against animals possessing an immortal soul. He begins by dismissing the Marquess’ doubts about animal reasoning ability based on the similarity of human and animal behaviors. By the time of this letter, this area must be very familiar and tired to Descartes. He quickly reiterates his position that animal ruse is nothing more than instinct, denies that they behave in any way that necessitates the existence of thought, and pulls out several examples of human unthinking behavior to assure the Marquess that there is no evidence in animal behavior for animal rationality (Æ 1255). He gives further examples at the close of the letter along with examples of animal behavior that demonstrate its instinctive quality, such as the action of scratching at the ground to cover excrement to little effect (Æ1256). Descartes’s discussion of animal passions, however, more clearly spells out the nature of the passions and Descartes’s belief that animals do possess them than the *Discours*:

Pour les mouvements de nos passions, bien qu’ils soient accompagnés en nous de pensée, à cause que nous avons la faculté de penser, il est néanmoins très évident qu’ils ne dépendent pas d’elle, pour ce qu’ils se font souvent malgré nous, et que, par conséquent, ils peuvent être dans les bêtes, et même plus violents qu’ils ne

sont dans les hommes, sans qu'on puisse, pour cela, conclure qu'elles aient des pensées. (CE1255)

The distinction between animal and human passions is in the experience of them. Humans are capable of reflecting on their passions, animals are not. The passions themselves must be entirely dependent upon the body. Descartes employs a physical term, “mouvements,” to describe them. Descartes more explicitly defines the passions in article 27 of *Les Passions de l'âme*, where he attributes the “mouvements” he speaks of in his letter to Newcastle to the animal spirits: “Après avoir considéré en quoi les passions de l'âme diffèrent de toutes ses autres pensées, il me semble qu'on peut généralement les définir des perceptions, ou des sentiments, ou des émotions de l'âme, qu'on rapporte particulièrement à elle, et qui sont causées, entretenues et fortifiées par quelque mouvement des esprits” (CE 708-09).

Human experience of the passions occurs without the consent of the will, which for Descartes implies their physical nature. This is enough for Descartes to establish the distinction between the physical dependence of the passions and the psychical experience of them that only humans possess. This distinction allows Descartes to reject animal passions as a sign of animal intelligence and set up his next topic, the absence of animal language.

Descartes is again on familiar ground. He reiterates the position expressed in the *Discours* that the absence of animal language, that is, the ability to communicate thought whether vocally or by bodily signs, is proof in itself that animals do not reason (CE 1255-56). His discussion of the animal passions earlier in the letter supports his rejection of known animal vocalizations and signs as indications of language on the grounds that the passions alone drive them and that therefore thought does not accompany these behaviors.

The most original comment in the letter, which shows the extent to which the question of the nature of the soul is at the core of Descartes's conception of the animal-machine, comes as a

response to another of the Marquess' doubts, this one stemming from the similarity between the human body and that of animals. The Marquess' argument is apparently that given this similarity, it is possible that there is "quelque pensée jointe à [leurs] organes, ainsi que nous expérimentons en nous, bien que la leur soit beaucoup moins parfaite" (CE 1256). This position parallels Montaigne's stance that humans and animals share a common nature but differ in terms of degrees.

Descartes could easily refer the Marquess to his arguments concerning language to explain away this objection, but he takes a more direct approach, that according to Leonora Cohen Rosenfield "strikes a religious note" (15), by supposing the consequences of attributing reason to animals, all animals, even those that differ greatly from humans in physical form: "si elles [animals] pensaient ainsi que nous, elles auraient une âme immortelle aussi bien que nous ; ce qui n'est pas vraisemblable, à cause qu'il n'y a point de raison pour le croire de quelques animaux, sans le croire de tous, et qu'il y en a plusieurs trop imparfaits pour pouvoir croire cela d'eux, comme sont les huîtres, les éponges, etc." (CE 1256-57). Descartes claims that the possession of an immortal soul is not "vraisemblable," that is, it has no appearance of truth, but his reason for dismissing the possibility rests on the imperfection of only certain animals.

While religious grounds may account for Descartes' position, the reader might also consider that Descartes considers the animals in question "imparfait," or incomplete, in that their bodies lack the development of humans'. Descartes's argument draws the Marquess' attention to animals whose bodies are remarkably different from those of humans. Descartes may be implying that the Marquess would not argue for animal reasoning on the basis of the possession of similar organs, etc., if he were to have animals such as oysters and sponges in mind. The

dissimilarity of the behavior and bodies of animals like sponges and humans belies common faculties.

What Descartes finds unbelievable is that animals of this sort should possess an immortal soul. It is here that he shows his own prejudices regarding human superiority. Sponges and oysters are imperfect creatures, unworthy of an immortal soul, whereas the relative perfection of humanity merits this distinction. Descartes provides no reasons for his unwillingness to believe a sponge worthy of an immortal soul, remarkable in that the first step of Descartes' method is to free oneself of preconceived opinions. Descartes holds humans as standards of perfection, of a complete work, against which he evaluates sponges and oysters. One could easily reverse the process and consider humans imperfect because they lack the organs and abilities of oysters and sponges; or of donkeys as La Mothe Le Vayer had done.

Apparently, Descartes also fails to recognize that his own argument calls into question the dividing lines between species. As Derrida points out in *L'Animal que donc je suis*, Descartes refuses to admit the possibility of inter-specific difference in animal nature, he considers all animals the same (87).¹⁶ Descartes merely assumes that if one animal possesses reason, then all must, and uncharacteristically uses the word "animal" in a sense that is meant to exclude humans whereas he generally uses the word "bête" to signal this distinction.¹⁷ Humans,

¹⁶ Derrida criticizes this way of treating non-human species more generally earlier in the same text (51-54).

¹⁷ Jean Nicot's definition of animal (1606) is merely "une creature ayant ame," while the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694) gives "Corps animé qui a du sentiment & du mouvement" and "une beste à quatre pieds vivant sur terre seulement, ou tantost sur terre, tantost dans l'eau." Descartes' use differs from both since it includes creatures without four legs but obviously excludes humans—who have "sentiment" and "mouvement"—and to whom Descartes confers the privilege of reason. Descartes's use corresponds perfectly to the definition given for "beste" in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, "Animal irraisonnable," perhaps due to the influence of Cartesian thought in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

by Descartes's own view, represent a dividing line among animals in the sense of animate beings, as they alone are capable of thought. By pointing out the great difference between oysters, sponges, etc. and humans, Descartes risks evoking the possibility of other divisions among animals. The behavior, organs and bodily form of a monkey are much closer to those of a human than to those of an oyster or sponge, after all. Descartes's confidence in the exclusivity of reason lies in the distinction of mind and body. In a Cartesian sense, the monkey is more like a sponge than a human because, like a sponge, its operations are completely mechanical. What Descartes denies is that the nature of a creature's organs has anything to do with reasoning ability, which is the product of an immaterial mind. Monkeys and humans have more organs in common and these organs are similar in size and shape, whereas the organs of oysters and sponges display little resemblance to human bodies.

Other than a small clarification about the nature of animal passions, Descartes's letter to Newcastle is mainly a restatement of the arguments found in the *Discours de la méthode*, but it is nonetheless an important piece of Descartes's literature on animals. The letter demonstrates that Montaigne and Charron are seen as adversaries to the Cartesian animal-machine, and reveals Descartes's prejudices surrounding the nature of animals and the human distinction of possessing a rational, immortal soul. The letter affirms that an immaterial, immortal soul exclusive to humans is the driving force of Descartes's treatment of animal nature. Questions about the nature of the human soul are now inextricably linked with questions concerning animal nature.

Conclusion

An examination of Descartes' *Discours de la méthode* reveals that his discussions of animals are primarily a rhetorical device to demonstrate the exclusivity of the human rational soul and thereby establish a clear demarcation between humans and animals. Descartes' responses to his objectors in the *Méditations métaphysiques* show that his conclusion that animals are bereft of thought was controversial, an indication that the *Discours*—for Descartes does not discuss animal nature specifically in the body of the *Méditations*—stimulated interest in the question of animal nature and the relationship of humans to animals. His response to Gassendi's objections do not overtly treat animal nature; they instead treat Descartes's proofs for an immaterial soul. This is important because Gassendi employed animals in his *Disquisitio Metaphysica* as a rhetorical device to question Descartes' methods of demonstrating the immateriality of the soul. The *Discours* is then responsible for cementing a link between questions about the nature of the soul and animal nature.

Descartes' letter of 1646 to the Marquess of Newcastle is significant because it illustrates the continued importance of the nature of the soul as it depends upon the nature of animals, thus affirming the rhetorical use of animals in the *Discours*. It is also of note because Descartes not only confirms his arguments and conclusions in the *Discours*, but also introduces an argument against animals possessing souls based on their lack of perfection relative to humanity. All three of the texts under examination in this chapter indicate that the discussions of animal nature are a rhetorical device to highlight a human nature distinct from animals on the basis of the possession of a rational, immaterial soul.

CHAPTER 4: THE GASSENDI-DESCARTES CONTROVERSY

Pierre Gassendi objected to Descartes's *Méditations Métaphysiques*, and his objections and Descartes's responses to them appeared in supplement to the text as the responses to the fifth objections. This was not, however, the end of the story. Gassendi elaborates on his original thoughts in a manuscript that began to circulate amongst his acquaintances and which Samuel Sorbière published with the author's blessing in 1644 as the *Disquisitio Metaphysica: Seu Dubitationes et Instantiae Adversus Renati Cartesii Metaphysicam et Responsa*. Gassendi is not at complete odds with Descartes's metaphysical beliefs. He, too, acknowledges the immortality of the soul, for instance. Gassendi objects to Descartes's pretention that he proves the existence of the soul distinct from the body, and thereby its immateriality. Gassendi asserts that Descartes fails to prove anything, and that his method is not worthy of the name since he does not detail its practice sufficiently to make it executable for his readers. Isabelle Moreau explains Gassendi's position: "Gassendi refuse de donner aveuglément son assentiment" to Descartes's dogmatic assertions and "dénonce précisément l'argument d'autorité sous la démonstration apparente" (GS 411). Gassendi prefers a more modest approach to knowledge, particularly of the metaphysical sort, and with this in mind he labels his objections "doubts" in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*, an acknowledgement of his own ignorance of the matters in question.

Gassendi's doubt reflects his sceptical background, though he often asserts opinions of his own to contest Descartes, which gives him the appearance of abandoning a skeptical stance. René Pintard explains Gassendi's seeming lack of flexibility as a strategy that in fact strengthens his skeptical position: "il affirme quelquefois ce que Descartes nie. Mais ce[t]...effort se termine dès qu'il a retrouvé son assiette, et l'on s'aperçoit alors qu'il n'a affecté la certitude que pour

mieux défendre ses anciens doutes” (483). Gassendi’s refutation of Herbert of Cherbury’s *De Veritate* and its truth-finding methods prior to his debate with Descartes is another testament to the skeptical aims of his objections to Descartes’s philosophy. For details of Gassendi’s responses to *De Veritate* see Howard Jones’ biography (120-27).

One of Descartes’s tenets which conflicts with Gassendi’s physics is the immaterial soul. Gassendi believes that the animal soul, like everything else, consists of matter, though of an extremely subtle variety. His writings indicate a strong measure of doubt—despite the contrary opinion of the church—concerning the immateriality of the human soul. Indeed, the primacy of matter is so great a part of Gassendi’s thought that Olivier Bloch views the essence of Gassendi’s objections to Descartes’s *Méditations* to reside in his “refus global du principe de méthode sur lequel repose le système cartésien, à savoir l’exigence d’un ‘ordre des raisons,’ différent de l’ordre des matières, et qui serait le véritable ordre philosophique” (49). Gassendi’s philosophical investigations start from the material world, whereas Descartes sets off from the purely rational.

Another take on this opposition comes from Thomas M. Lennon, who likens the difference between Gassendi and Descartes to that of the Giants and the Gods in Plato’s “The Sophist.” The Giants confine their knowledge to the physical, the world of appearances, while the knowledge of the Gods surpasses the material and attains reality. In seventeenth-century terms, Lennon defines the Giants as “logical vacuists” which he places in contrast to the Gods, the “logical plenum theorists.” The Gods’ view is “the intelligibility and the necessity of being and the unintelligibility and impossibility of non-being” with the Giants holding the opposite view (35-37). Lennon’s parallel is apt, for Gassendi rejects Descartes’ clear and distinct ideas just as the giants reject “intellectual intuition” (Lennon 44).

Descartes' animal has nothing akin to a soul; a soul is the privilege of humanity. On the other hand, an examination of François Bernier's *Abrégé* of Gassendi's philosophy shows that his opponent upheld a multiple soul system. Animals do possess a soul, and they are even capable of complex mental activity, though in Gassendi's view their abilities fall short of reasoning and he accordingly attributes their mental activities to a material soul. Gassendi allots an immaterial rational soul to humans alone.¹⁸ The fact that the rational soul is immaterial, raises the question of the materiality of the animal soul. Without even considering the question of how something immaterial exerts its will over the material world, Gassendi had reason to defend the soul's materiality. Animals play an important role in Gassendi's argumentation, and as a result, his controversy with Descartes profoundly links questions about the nature of animals, particularly language and reasoning abilities, with questions about the corporeality and immortality of the human soul. His work is therefore an important factor in a change in the rhetorical use of animals.

The Question of the Animal Soul in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*

Gassendi explains his position on the immateriality of the soul in his third doubt concerning Descartes's second meditation. He denies that Descartes proves thought distinct from the body, and thereby establishes an incorporeal soul: "Enfin vous remarquez *que vous pensez*. Ce qui assurément ne saurait être nié : mais il vous reste à prouver que la faculté de penser est tellement au-dessus de la nature corporelle que ni les esprits, ni aucun autre corps prompt à se mouvoir, pur et subtil, ne puissent recevoir une disposition telle qu'ils deviennent

¹⁸ This despite the criticism of anthropocentrism that Olivier Bloch finds in his work: "il ne manque pas...de critiquer en termes mordants l'anthropocentrisme et l'anthropomorphisme" (45).

capables de pensée” (102,104). Gassendi’s point is that even if Descartes conceives of the mind as something independent of the body, this does not prove that matter is incapable of being the source of the mind. This objection is not Gassendi’s alone. Isabelle Moreau claims it is “une objection majeure à la thèse cartésienne, dont la fortune est indéniable au sein des milieux libertins” (455).

To contest Descartes’s proofs, Gassendi raises the problem of animal nature. While the inability of matter to produce thought remains unproven, the possibility of animal thought, and hence, an animal soul, remains a possibility. Since animals do show some indication of thinking ability, Descartes must also prove that their soul is incorporeal: “Il faut prouver en même temps que les âmes des Bêtes ne sont pas corporelles, car elles ne sont pas dépourvues de pensée, ou plutôt, en dehors des fonctions de la sensibilité externe, elles connaissent quelque chose intérieurement non seulement durant la veille, mais encore dans le sommeil” (104). Gassendi makes this claim, presumably, because otherwise there would be an inconsistency in Descartes’s treatment of the soul. Gassendi is implying that if the human soul is incorporeal, then so must be the soul of an animal, something that he must know that Descartes does not accept since in addition to the *Meditations*, he has undoubtedly read the *Discours de la méthode*. He attempts to corner Descartes, forcing him into an attempted proof of the inability of animals to reason, something he believes Descartes incapable of doing.

Gassendi includes Descartes’s responses to his doubts. Descartes’s attitude as he begins his rebuttal in this case gives an accurate sense of the general spirit of his replies:

Et, pour le dire une fois pour toutes, car vous usez presque toujours du même style, et vous ne combattez pas mes raisons, mais tantôt les dissimulant comme si elles étaient de peu de valeur, tantôt les rapportant d’une manière imparfaite et défectueuse, vous en tirez prétexte pour me faire diverses objections qui sont celles que des ignorants ont coutume d’avancer vulgairement contre mes conclusions, ou contre d’autres qui leur ressemblent, ou même qui sont

différentes, objections qui n'ont rien à voir avec le sujet ou qui ont déjà été écartées et résolues en leur lieu, il ne sera plus nécessaire que je réponde à chacune de vos demandes ; car les mêmes choses que j'ai déjà écrites seraient à répéter cent fois. Mais je traiterai seulement avec brièveté de celles qui sembleront susceptibles d'arrêter les lecteurs qui ne sont pas tout à fait stupides. Et quant à ceux qui font moins d'attention à la force des raisons qu'à la multitude des paroles, je ne fais pas tant de cas de leur approbation que je veuille m'étendre en discours pour trouver grâce devant eux. (104)

Descartes is correct in several of his accusations. Gassendi not only states that Descartes's reasoning has "peu de valeur," he also claims that there are no reasons to be found in it at all.

Gassendi is also quite prolix; the *Disquisitio Metaphysica* is a lengthy document. Likewise, he regularly moves into areas that Descartes does not treat in the *Méditations*, but which he asserts have bearing on Descartes's conclusions.

Descartes reminds Gassendi of this fact again when he summarizes the goal of his second meditation and relegates the burden of proof for anything beyond that goal to his accuser:

Enfin, parce que souvent vous exigez de moi des raisons alors que vous-même, ô Chair, n'en avez aucune, et que le fardeau de preuve vous incombe, je dois vous avertir que pour bien philosopher il n'est pas besoin de prouver que toutes les choses que nous n'admettons pas parce que nous en ignorons la vérité, sont fausses, mais il faut seulement bien prendre garde de ne rien admettre pour vrai que nous ne puissions le prouver comme tel. Ainsi, quand je reconnais que je suis une substance qui pense et quand je forme une conception claire et distincte de cette substance pensante, dans laquelle rien n'est contenu des choses qui appartiennent à la conception de la substance corporelle, cela suffit pleinement pour que j'affirme que je ne suis rien d'autre, autant que je me connais, qu'une chose qui pense ; et c'est tout ce que j'ai affirmé dans la Seconde Méditation, dont il est question pour le moment. (106)

As Descartes warns Gassendi at the beginning of his response, his defense consists in reiterating his reason for concluding that he is a thinking substance, a substance without any quality common to corporal substances. The proof lies in Descartes's clear and distinct conception of the thinking substance, a proof that Gassendi does not admit. For a thorough and succinct account of Gassendi's objections to Descartes's clear and distinct ideas, see Antonia Lolordo's

Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy (56-57). According to Lolordo, Gassendi is asking for criteria for establishing clear and distinct ideas. Descartes responds by indicating his method and stating that no criteria are necessary once one has successfully followed it.

Gassendi at various junctures points out that Descartes does not have a clear and distinct idea of a thinking substance, since he fails to describe its exact nature, but for Descartes this is not necessary:

Et je ne devais pas admettre que cette substance pensante fût une sorte de corps aisément mobile, pur, delié, etc....puisque je n'avais alors aucune raison qui me le persuadât ; si vous en avez quelqu'une, à vous de nous l'enseigner, mais non pas d'exiger de moi que je fasse la preuve de la fausseté d'une chose que je me suis refusé à recevoir pour vraie pour le seul motif que je n'en savais rien. (106)

Gassendi claims that Descartes must prove that the soul is not material before he can establish that it is an immaterial thinking substance, but Descartes stands by his clear and distinct conception of the thinking substance as the only reason necessary. If Gassendi wishes to say that the soul is material it is up to him to prove it, but Descartes's proof for the immateriality of the soul remains valid without an accompanying proof that it is not material. Such a proof lies outside the bounds of Descartes's project. Likewise for any proof regarding the soul of animals:

Et lorsque vous ajoutez *que je dois aussi prouver que les âmes des bêtes sont incorporelles et que ce corps grossier ne contribue pas à la pensée*, vous faites voir que non seulement vous ignorez à qui incombe l'obligation de la preuve, mais encore ce que chacun doit être à même de prouver ; car pour moi, je ne pense pas que les âmes des bêtes soient incorporelles, ni que le corps grossier ne contribue en rien à la pensée ; mais seulement que la consideration de ces choses n'est ici nullement à sa place. (106)

As before, Descartes feels no obligation to prove positions which contradict his conclusions. Furthermore, the subject of Descartes's *Meditations* is the nature of man and not animal nature. He has a direct experience of his own mind, and via his method he proposes the discovery of

certain truths regarding his own nature, but an understanding of animal nature is not one of the results of his meditations. As far as Descartes is concerned, discussions of animal nature have nothing to do with his second meditation.

Gassendi has a serious advantage in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*, due to his ability to rebut Descartes's responses, which he does under the title of "instantia." He always has the final word. His instantiae underscore the problem of reconciliation of the two men's opinions. Just as Descartes refuses to accept that more proof is necessary than that which he provides in his *Meditations*, Gassendi refuses Descartes's clear and distinct conceptions as proof of anything other than Descartes's excessive pride and force of will. In Gassendi's view, Descartes's procedure allows for only a hollow victory, his purported reasons are not appropriate for humans with free will, but only for animals. Gassendi's quip plays on the difference between humans and animals that takes an important role in the debate:

Mais, enfin, que je demande tout le temps des raisons, je comprends que cela vous soit fort désagréable ; seulement j'ai bien aussi le droit de le faire, puisque vous vous vantez de démontrer, c'est-à-dire de prouver par des raisons extrêmement approfondies ce que vous dites ; et que cependant je ne vois nulle raison de ce genre. Vous vous conduisez, vous, en juge de l'Ecole ; souffrez que ceux que vous voulez instruire se conduisent en auditeurs d'esprit libre : sinon, s'ils se conduisent comme les bêtes d'un troupeau, c'est-à-dire s'ils ne croient qu'en vous, parce que *c'est vous qui le dites*, craignez que l'on vous prenne non pour un conducteur d'hommes, mais de bestiaux. (112)

Gassendi continues by reasserting his right to demand reasons in response to his doubts, throwing the burden of proof back upon Descartes (112), this includes the responsibility of proving the incorporeality of animal souls which Gassendi demands in his original doubt.

In his instantiae, Gassendi elaborates on the pertinence of the question of the animal soul. He must believe that the connection is obvious, which it probably was for Descartes, since he chides Descartes for pretending that it is irrelevant:

Certes vous vous montrez ici plus plaisant que jamais, pour arriver à dissimuler si bien quelles raisons j'avais de dire que vous aviez cela [the immateriality of the animal soul] à prouver. Car votre thèse telle qu'elle a été exposée n'était pas, à vrai dire, *que les Ames des Bêtes sont incorporelles* ; mais comme c'est cependant une chose qui résulte immédiatement de ce que les bêtes pensent, et de ce que vous concluez du raisonnement à la nature incorporelle, voilà la raison pour laquelle j'ai cru qu'il vous fallait songer à la manière dont vous pourriez soutenir cette idée. Car ou bien il vous faut nier que, du fait qu'une chose quelconque est pensante, il soit légitime de conclure qu'elle est incorporelle ; ou bien nier que l'Ame d'une Bête soit une chose pensante, c'est-à-dire, comme par la suite vous l'interprétez, une chose qui imagine, qui sent, qui doute, qui ne veut pas, qui veut, etc... ; ou bien il vous faut accorder absolument que l'Ame des Bêtes est incorporelle. (120)

Gassendi sees Descartes's definition of the soul as an incorporeal thinking substance as relying on a necessary connection between thought and the existence of such a soul. In essence, he is right. Descartes infers from his thoughts that there is a substance to account for them. Nietzsche criticized Descartes on this point for constructing reality from grammatical assumptions, as Hassan Melehy explains in his paper "Silencing the Animals" (268). Since thinking is a mode, there must be a thinking substance. Since Descartes imagines the possibility of thought without the body, the substance must be immaterial, and Gassendi interprets this as a necessary result: where there is thought there is also an incorporeal thinking substance, i.e. the soul. If such is the case, animals must have incorporeal souls, since they too, think.

Gassendi is being just as playful as he accuses Descartes of being. He has read the *Meditations* and he knows that Descartes asserts that animals do not think at all. This is the second option Gassendi sees open for Descartes; he must admit an immaterial animal soul, or deny animals thought. If Descartes does respond as he has in the *Meditations* by saying that, indeed, animals do not think, Gassendi hopes to use his own understanding of the properties of the soul against him. As Gassendi interprets Descartes, by saying that animals do not think, he denies them the thinking substance that is responsible for imagination, sensation, doubt, want,

etc. Descartes must deny the animal all of these abilities, a stance that Gassendi believes warrants a skeptical attitude and necessitates proof that Descartes is unable to provide. In his opinion, Descartes cannot simply brush aside such demands since belief in the animal possession of abilities that constitute thought by Descartes's own definition is the conventional, majority opinion. Descartes proposes something new when he conceives of an animal-machine, and his conception requires proof.

Of course, Descartes could simply acknowledge an immaterial animal soul, but Gassendi knows that he will not, since there would then be no reason not to assume the animal soul immortal, no reason to assume it drastically different from the human soul. Since the *instantiae* are the final word concerning Gassendi's third doubt involving Descartes's second meditation, one can only imagine an appropriate response. In the *Discours de la méthode*, Descartes debunks traditional arguments for animal reason and gives what he considers proofs of the inability of animals to think, so he could simply refer Gassendi to that text, which the latter no doubt finds less conclusive than its author.

In the end, Gassendi does not want proof from Descartes. He considers such proofs impossible, because he holds that animals are not completely without thought. The point of Gassendi's recourse to animal nature is to point out that Descartes has no reason to assume that matter cannot be the source of thought, as his *instantiae* indicate: "Et n'ai-je pas aussi objecté avec raison qu'il restait toujours à surmonter pour vous une difficulté dont vous ne dites rien, à savoir de prouver que la facilité de penser soit au-dessus de la nature corporelle ?" (120). Gassendi's real issue is with Descartes's presumption and the idea of an immaterial soul, the question of the animal soul is just one way of attacking it.

Gassendi returns to the question in his sixth doubt concerning Descartes's second meditation. In fact, Gassendi's sixth doubt is a restatement of his demand that Descartes provide proof for the immateriality of the animal soul that appears in his third doubt. In its revised form, Gassendi focusses on the implication of an animal soul from the definition of the thinking substance that Descartes provides, and which he mentions in the instantia following Descartes's response to his third doubt. Gassendi attacks Descartes's definition in this way: "Si l'Ame est une chose qui sent, qui imagine, etc..., il semble nécessaire d'attribuer une âme aux Bêtes" (148).

He begins his doubt with the question of sensation. His argument rests on the apparent similarity between human and animal sensation: "voyez [...] si la faculté de sentir que l'on trouve chez les bêtes, étant fort peu différente de la vôtre, ne mérite pas aussi d'être appelée pensée, de sorte qu'il y aurait chez les Bêtes même un Esprit qui ne différerait pas du vôtre" (148). He notes that Descartes states that the mind is in the brain and that spirits transported by the nerves enable sensation (148). Gassendi is ready to accept this, but notes that the existence of a brain, nerves, etc. in the animal, argues for the existence of an animal soul: "Soit : mais il y a chez les Bêtes des nerfs, des esprits, un cerveau, il y a dans le cerveau un principe connaissant qui de la même manière reçoit ce qui lui est rapporté par les esprits et accomplit la sensation" (148). Gassendi is saying that since animals share the same body parts Descartes claims are responsible for sensation, one should assume they also share the same minds, unless there is proof against it.

Gassendi anticipates Descartes's response, an argument based on the superior functions of the human intellect that separate humans from animals, which he attacks as he exposes it:

Vous direz que ce principe dans les cerveaux des bêtes n'est rien d'autre que la Fantaisie, ou faculté imaginative. Mais vous-même, montrez-nous que vous êtes

dans le cerveau autre chose qu'une Fantaisie ou [faculté] imaginative propre à l'homme. Je demandais tout à l'heure un Critérium par lequel vous prouviez que c'est autre chose ; mais à mon avis, vous ne pourrez apporter cela. Vous alléguerez sans doute des opérations beaucoup plus relevées que celles que l'on obtient des bêtes : mais tout de même que l'homme, encore qu'il soit le plus parfait des animaux, n'est cependant pas en dehors du nombre des animaux, ainsi, quoique vous vous montriez, d'après ce qui précède, comme la plus parfaite des Fantaisies ou des [facultés] imaginatives, cependant vous ne vous mettez pas hors de leur nombre. Car le fait que vous vous appliquiez spécialement la dénomination d'esprit peut constituer une dénomination d'une nature plus noble, mais non par pour cela d'une nature différente. (148,150)

Gassendi's attack consists of two separate but related arguments. The first is that although Descartes claims that animal sensation falls under the domain of an imaginative faculty, there is no reason to assume that his own sensation is any different. The second is that even though human faculties, such as the imaginative faculty in question, may surpass those of animals, they are not of a completely different kind. Gassendi's argument is that human and animal abilities of sensation are of the same nature, they differ only by degrees. Gassendi takes this logic a step further and applies it to humans and animals in general. In so doing he resembles Montaigne. Humans are not a different kind of being than animals, they are only a more perfect example. The human mind is not of a completely different kind than that of animals, it is simply more advanced. As Gassendi sees it, if Descartes wishes to prove his mind is of a different nature than that of animals, he must demonstrate capabilities with no animal parallel, something he does not do: "Certes (pour prouver que vous êtes d'une nature différente (c'est-à-dire, comme vous le prétendez, incorporelle), vous devriez être capable de quelque opération qui s'accomplisse par d'autres moyens que ceux dont usent les bêtes, et, si ce n'est en dehors du cerveau, que ce soit au moins indépendant du cerveau : or vous ne le faites pas" (150).

The flipside of arguing that the similarities between humans and animals point to an incorporeal soul for animals, if, in fact, Descartes has proven that the human soul is immaterial,

is the possibility that these similarities suggest that humans behave much as machines if Descartes has proven that animals act only according to instinctive impulses. Gassendi notes that Descartes cites “une impulsion aveugle des esprits et du reste des organes” as the cause of all animal behavior, and states that they operate “de la même façon que dans une horloge ou dans quelque autre machine s’accomplissent des mouvements” (150). Gassendi does not deny this, but he wonders why this would not also be the case for humans:

Mais si vrai que cela puisse être à l’égard de diverses fonctions comme la nutrition, la pulsation des artères et autres semblables, qui se font, elles aussi, de la même façon chez l’homme, est-il possible d’affirmer que les actions des sens ou celles qu’on appelle passions de l’âme s’accomplissent chez les Bêtes par une impulsion aveugle, mais non pas chez nous ? (150)

Gassendi limits his discussion to sensation and emotion, where he sees a parallel between humans and animals. Given this parallel, there’s no reason to assume a difference between human and animal sensation. Gassendi does not conclude that animals have an immaterial soul, but that humans have a corporeal one. In other words, he still contends that matter can be responsible for thought. The key is the role of matter, the source of sensation, and the body, also material, that receives impressions. Gassendi takes the example of a dog and a bone to illustrate his view.

Gassendi uses atomistic physics to describe the act of sensation, that suggests Lucretius’ simulacra. Even the dog’s attraction to the bone he describes as “des sortes de chaînes très fines” (150). He next develops the flight reaction of a dog in response to a thrown rock, and asserts that humans operate exactly the same way in similar circumstances: “Mais n’est-il pas exact que tout cela se passe de même chez l’homme ?” (150). As in his third doubt, Gassendi foresees Descartes’s response, and attempts to defuse it:

Je suis libre, dites-vous, et il est en mon pouvoir de détourner l’homme de la fuite aussi bien que de l’envie d’atteindre l’objet. Mais c’est justement la même chose

que fait ce principe connaissant qui est dans la bête, et s'il se trouve parfois que le chien, sans craindre aucunement les menaces et les coups, se jette sur la proie qu'il a vue, combien de fois l'homme ne fait-il pas des choses semblables ? (150)

Although humans can voluntarily suppress impulses or ignore stimuli, Gassendi differs from Descartes in that he attributes this ability to animals, as well. Essentially, Gassendi is making another case for the likelihood that matter can accomplish thought, and in turn the materiality of the soul. His attack is two-pronged. On the one hand, animals exhibit signs of free will, thereby demonstrating an affinity with humans. On the other hand, humans exhibit signs of impulsive, instinctive behavior, thereby demonstrating an affinity with animals. Gassendi uses these similarities to address two of the traditional dividing lines between humans and animals, language and reasoning ability.

Descartes asserts that a dog barks by instinctive reaction, and Gassendi counters that humans, too, speak at least to some degree by compulsion: “*Le chien, dites-vous, aboie par pure impulsion, et non par choix, comme l'homme parle. Mais il y a chez l'homme des raisons de penser qu'il parle impulsivement : car ce que vous attribuez à un choix réfléchi provient pour la plus grande part de la force de l'impulsion*” (150). Gassendi seems to be implying that instinctive impulses determine in part the act of choosing in humans, though he does not clarify the role of these impulses. Conversely, choice plays a part in the impulsive actions of animals: “à chaque animal aussi il y a un pouvoir de choix là où l'impulsion est la plus vive” (150). He expands on this idea, relating a first-hand experience that demonstrates volition in a dog's use of its bark: “En vérité, j'ai vu un chien qui réglait son aboiement sur le son d'une trompette de telle sorte qu'il imitait toutes les variations du son, aigu ou grave, lent ou rapide, bien qu'on les produisît de façon arbitraire et à l'improviste, soit en les augmentant, soit en les prolongeant” (150). One could argue that the dog's imitation is an instinctive behavior that does not differ in

any way from a parrot's ability to imitate human speech, but the difference seems to hinge on the arbitrary and random nature of the tones the dog imitates. The dog's barks may be instinctive, but they do not represent the same kind of learned behavior that we might term conditioned behavior today, as a parrot's mimicking. For Gassendi, this indicates that choice plays a part in the dog's behavior and thus the behavior resembles the human use of speech.

Of course, this does not mean that the dog's barking is language, but Gassendi holds that animals do use language, but not human language, and that to restrict the definition of language to only specifically human forms of communication does not mean that these forms are different in nature to animal forms. Like Montaigne, Gassendi argues that animals communicate amongst themselves in animal ways, ways that although not identical to human speech nonetheless parallel human language:

Vous dites qu'elles ne parlent pas : mais si elles ne profèrent point de paroles humaines (aussi ne sont-elles point hommes), elles en profèrent pourtant qui leur sont propres, et dont elles usent comme nous usons des nôtres. Un fou, dites-vous, peut bien assembler plusieurs mots pour signifier quelque chose, ce que néanmoins la Bête la plus intelligente ne saurait faire. Mais voyez s'il est bien équitable de votre part d'exiger d'une bête les paroles d'un homme, et de ne pas tenir compte de celles qui lui sont propres. (152)

It is unjust to hold animals to human standards, by so doing, Descartes perfunctorily dismisses all evidence of animal communication that argues for something akin to human language. One might just as easily determine that humans do not use language by holding them to animal standards for communication. Gassendi takes a larger view of language that accommodates both human and animal forms of communication.

This is also true when it comes to reasoning ability. Although animals may not reason as humans do, they do still display behavior that implies reasoning ability. The difference between human and animal reasoning is a matter of degree not nature:

Les bêtes, dites-vous, n'ont point de raison. Elles manquent bien d'une raison humaine, mais non de celle qui est la leur, et tellement qu'on ne peut plus dire, semble-t-il, qu'elles soient privées de raison, si ce n'est par rapport à nous ou à notre espèce ; et d'ailleurs la faculté discursive ou la raison semble être une faculté générale, qui peut leur être attribuée aussi bien que la faculté de connaître ou le sens interne. Vous dites qu'elles ne raisonnent point. Mais si leurs raisonnements ne sont point aussi parfaits et ne portent point sur autant de choses que ceux des hommes, encore est-il qu'elles raisonnent cependant, et il semble qu'il n'y ait rien de différent, sinon quant au plus et au moins. (150,152)

Gassendi takes an overview of reasoning ability as he has with language. Animals need not match every human reasoning capability or exercise what common reasoning ability there is at the same level as humans for their mental capacities to deserve the appellation reason. Human reason is not of a different order than animal reason; the two differ merely in degrees of perfection. The importance of this fact is, again, that since there is no reason to believe human mental abilities of a different kind than animals', there is also no reason to believe that the human mind is of a different kind. If the human mind is incorporeal, so is the animal mind. If the animal mind is material, then so is the human mind. The latter is, of course, the position Gassendi defends.

Descartes recognizes that Gassendi is repeating previous objections, although in different form, reiterating his position that Gassendi's questions concerning animal nature are "hors de propos" and do not require a response (152). Descartes does, however, respond to Gassendi, and although his response is only about one quarter the length of Gassendi's doubt, it elaborates on his earlier position and he verbalizes his proof for the immateriality of the soul.

As for the ability of animals to think, Descartes merely exposes his proof for human thought, and takes a Montaignian position regarding the mental experiences of animals: "en effet l'esprit occupé à méditer intérieurement sur soi-même peut bien expérimenter qu'il pense, mais non pas encore si les bêtes pensent ou non ; et il ne recherche cela qu'ensuite et seulement a

posteriori, à partir des opérations dont elles sont capables” (152). Descartes does not bother to take on the question of whether or not animals think, but points out that it is not self-evident as is human thought. That makes animal thought a hypothesis, and not an obvious fact as Gassendi portrays it. This being the case, Descartes has no need to prove that they do not think, at least no more responsibility than Gassendi has to prove that they do. The two have covered this ground before. Descartes does acknowledge that if one is to resolve the question, it is necessary to judge from animal behavior, but he goes no further. In fact, he differs very much from Montaigne in that he believes that our experience of animal behavior indicates a non-thinking animal, while Montaigne believes that the body of evidence suggests a rational animal.

Descartes does not reiterate his arguments against a thinking animal that appear in the *Discours de la méthode* or in the *Meditations*. The reader is left to wonder if this is because he wishes to avoid entanglement with Gassendi over arguments his opponent will obviously not accept, or perhaps because he tires of the lengthy debate. Gassendi accuses Descartes of avoiding sure contradiction in his instantia. In the end, Descartes feels no compulsion to reaffirm his position because his position is that establishing human thought, which each human mind can establish for itself, is enough to establish an incorporeal thinking substance.

Descartes finally answers the question to which Gassendi so often calls upon him to respond when he offers his reasoning for the immaterial soul: “Mais j’ai souvent apporté de véritable critère par lequel on reconnaît que l’esprit est différent du corps, et qui est que toute la nature de l’esprit consiste en ce qu’il pense, mais que toute la nature du corps consiste en ce qu’il est une chose étendue, et qu’il y a absolument rien de commun entre la pensée et l’étendue” (152).

Thought does not have extension, while all matter does. In Descartes’s view thought’s lack of extension proves an incorporeal thinking substance.

He anticipates, however, Gassendi's objection, that the possibility still exists that matter produces thought, which follows from Gassendi's argument that the brain, nerves, etc. are responsible for sensation. If this is the case, why not all thought? Descartes claims that only imagination and sensation require the brain, and he then gives an example of the type of mental conception that qualifies properly as thought, and which he asserts occurs independently of the body:

J'ai souvent aussi montré fort clairement que l'esprit peut agir indépendamment du cerveau, car il est certain que le cerveau ne peut être de nul usage en vue de l'intellection pure, mais seulement quand il s'agit d'imaginer ou de sentir. Et bien que, lorsqu'il survient une image ou une sensation puissante (quand il arrive quand le cerveau est troublé), il ne soit pas aisé pour l'esprit de s'appliquer à d'autres choses pour les comprendre, néanmoins nous expérimentons, lorsque l'imagination n'est pas aussi forte, que nous pouvons concevoir quelque chose d'entièrement différent de ce que nous imaginons : comme lorsqu'au milieu de notre sommeil nous nous apercevons que nous rêvons ; il faut bien alors que ce soit un effet de l'imagination si nous rêvons, mais pour que nous nous apercevions de notre rêve, il y faut l'entendement seul. (152)

In effect, Descartes's example relies on his definitions of the imagination and sensation which he arbitrarily refuses to recognize as thought. His reason for conceiving of an immaterial soul raises the question of why images in the mind and particularly sensations, which one could argue also lack extension, do not establish incorporeal imagining and incorporeal sensing substances, respectively, yet thought of the sort Descartes describes, perceiving that one is dreaming, serves as the foundation of an incorporeal thinking substance. One might also still wonder why Descartes is so certain that the brain is of "nul usage" when it comes to the mental workings he defines as thought.

Gassendi sees apparent contradictions in Descartes's description of the thinking substance as "une chose qui sent" and the distinction he draws in his response between sensation and pure thought. This is something Gassendi mentions in his third doubt. As Gassendi sees it,

Descartes is caught between admitting the existence of an animal soul, which then must be incorporeal, or denying not only that animals are incapable of the “pur entendement” of which he speaks, but even sensation. His summary of the state of their debate on the issue to this point is fairly accurate, and he feels it accounts for Descartes’s hesitancy to discuss animal nature:

Vous ajoutez que *les questons que je pose sur les bêtes sont hors de propos*. Et pourtant que pouvait-on dire plus à propos, à moins que vous n’ayez voulu vous échapper en le cachant ? En définissant la *Chose qui pense*, vous avez dit entre autres qu’elle *était une chose qui sent*. Et comme d’après cela on pouvait, selon vous, former la proposition : Une chose qui sent est une chose qui pense ; j’ai alors affirmé cette chose manifeste : *La Bête est une chose qui sent*, et conclu : *Donc la Bête est une chose qui pense*. Puis comme vous prétendiez que la *Chose qui pense est identique à l’Esprit*, j’ai dit que par conséquent *la Bête serait un Esprit*, ou qu’il y *aurait un esprit dans la Bête*. Comme enfin vous aviez l’air de chercher diverses distinctions entre le Sens, la Fantaisie, l’Esprit, j’ai pris soin de vous interdire cette possibilité ; afin que, refusant ailleurs de mettre chez les Bêtes l’Esprit et la Raison, vous soyez contraint de retomber sur cette proposition contradictoire et absurde, qu’il y a un Esprit et une Raison chez les Bêtes. Alors est-ce que les choses que j’ai demandées au sujet des Bêtes étaient hors de propos, et n’est-ce pas plutôt vous qui avez manqué de certitude et de réflexion dans cet endroit, au point que, n’ayant rien à répondre, vous avez cru qu’il fallait prévenir le danger en disant que *cela n’avait pas besoin de réponse*? (152, 154)

In fact, Gassendi reports his argument much more straightforwardly and from an entirely different angle than in either his third doubt or the current sixth doubt concerning Descartes’s second meditation. The straightforward presentation of the logic here is possible because the surreptitious way in which he brought the argument into play seems to have delivered its desired result. To Gassendi, Descartes contradicts himself in his response to the sixth doubt and since Gassendi suspects that his reticence regarding the question of the animal soul stems from his discovery of his difficult position, Gassendi feels there is nothing further to gain by masking his ploy. To the contrary, it is to his advantage to reveal that he has caught Descartes in a contradiction, especially in an *instantia*, since Descartes has no chance to rebut.

Gassendi also calls Descartes on his refusal to discuss animal nature on the grounds that one can only derive animal mental experience from outward behavior, as if it were necessary to enter the minds of animals to determine their nature conclusively (154). He again sees an attempt to avoid the trap in which Gassendi has caught him:

Car vous voyez que si vous dites, après avoir examiné leurs opérations, que *les Bêtes pensent*, alors il faut, selon vos principes, en inférer qu'il y a en elles de l'Esprit ; si vous dites qu'*elles ne pensent pas*, alors il faut, des mêmes principes inférer qu'il n'y a pas en elles de sensibilité. C'est pourquoi, voyant des deux côtés un précipice, vous jugez préférable de demeurer dans cette position critique plutôt que de vous jeter dans l'un ou dans l'autre. (154)

Gassendi believes that observation of animals is enough to determine whether or not they think, and he has every reason to assume that Descartes feels the same way since he denies animal thought in both the *Discours* and the *Méditations*. Although Descartes claims that Gassendi is not faithfully reproducing his words, Gassendi reminds him of the passages in the *Méditations* and the *Discours* where he denies reasoning to animals: “vous n’avez tout de même pas pu cacher que la plus grande partie des passages où je vous ai cité, sont bien réellement de vous, car si quelqu’un avait lu les *Méditations* ou cette partie [du *Discours*] *de la Méthode* où vous refusez aux bêtes le raisonnement, il observerait qu’il en est bien ainsi” (154). Here Gassendi admits that he does not always quote Descartes exactly. In fact each paraphrases the other’s position, but to Gassendi this is not the real issue, the question is whether or not he distorts Descartes’s meaning: “Si toutefois je n’ai pas rapporté toutes vos paroles, mais resserré le sens en moins de mots, ainsi que je l’ai même signalé auparavant, il fallait montrer en quel point je n’étais pas resté assez fidèle sur le sens” (156). In truth, that Descartes denies animal reasoning is plain, the real question is how he preserves exclusivity of thought for humans while still attributing sensation to animals, just as Gassendi asserts. Descartes’s response would most likely involve an explanation of the relation between sensation and the mind that negates the necessity of one from

the other, doing just as Gassendi claims he must do, demonstrate Gassendi's misunderstanding of his philosophy, but the call to duty comes in an *instantia* following Descartes's response and represents the final word on the matter.

Gassendi's *instantia* against Descartes's response to his sixth doubt concerning the second meditation consists of four articles. The remaining three articles leave the topic of the original doubt, the nature of the animal soul, and concern the rest of Descartes's assertions in his response in which he attempts to demonstrate the truth of his immaterial thinking substance. The second and third articles address the inadequacies of Descartes's reputed proof. In the second article Gassendi notes that simply stating that the entire nature of the mind is in the fact that it thinks does not constitute a proof. He presents the possibility of a substance with both mental and physical functions: "on peut soutenir une même substance pourvue de diverses facultés peut penser par l'une, engendrer par l'autre, agir par une troisième. Et s'il en est ainsi, il est certain qu'une partie de la nature de l'esprit ne sera pas toute de nature spirituelle" (156). In effect, the fact that the mind thinks does not mean that thought is necessarily the only faculty of the mind or soul.¹⁹ Gassendi also takes the opportunity in the second article of his *instantia* to reiterate at length his position that Descartes cannot prove that animals do not think or that matter cannot be responsible for thought as he contests the assertion that the entire nature of the mind is thought and the entire nature of matter is in extension (156). The third article is an extension of the second in which Gassendi examines thoroughly, validating Descartes claim that he is unduly verbose, the assumption that by perceiving that the mind is a substance which thinks, one therefore has an intimate knowledge of the nature of the mind (160, 162). Obviously, Gassendi

¹⁹ That Gassendi conceives of a soul with various faculties leads one to wonder to what extent he believed a distinction between the rational and sensitive souls necessary, although he preserves the division in his philosophy.

holds that there can always be things about the mind that one does not know, as he points out in the second article.

In his last article of the *instantia*, Gassendi tackles new material, Descartes's example of the dreaming mind that perceives itself dreaming. Descartes uses this example to describe "pur entendement," that is, thought that does not require the brain. Gassendi contests the possibility of even this sort of thought taking place without it. He again uses Descartes words against him:

Vous souvenez-vous d'avoir jamais compris quelque chose de la sorte, d'une façon pure et sans le cerveau ? Quelqu'un peut-il s'en souvenir quand vous le lui rappelez ? Vous avez vous-même dit un peu plus haut qu'il y fallait des traces dans le cerveau. Si donc vous ne pouvez vous souvenir d'aucune chose que vous ayez comprise sans traces dans le cerveau, et par conséquent sans l'aide du cerveau, comment savoir alors si vous avez jamais compris quelque chose d'une façon pure ? (164)

Gassendi cannot prove that the mind must rely on the brain without resorting to premises that require substantial proof. Therefore, he attacks Descartes by noting an apparent contradiction in his thought. It is enough to throw doubt on Descartes's purported proofs. In addition to the contradiction he remarks, he concludes his *instantia* with a completely material explanation for the perception of the dreaming self to contest the idea that "l'Imagination ou faculté imaginative et l'Intellect sont deux facultés réellement distinctes" (164) and give evidence for the possibility that they are "plutôt une seule faculté qui accomplit deux fonctions" (164,166). As he presents a plausible possibility to which Descartes has no chance to respond, Gassendi casts more doubt on Descartes's immaterial soul by offering his own material explanation of what Descartes calls pure intellection.

The third and sixth doubts concerning Descartes's second meditation demonstrate to what end Gassendi takes recourse in the animal. In each case, Gassendi employs the example of animals to undermine Descartes's foundation of an immaterial soul. Gassendi argues for animal

language and reasoning ability, because a rational animal must have a mind of the same nature as humans, immaterial as Descartes claims and thus depriving him of any reason to assert the immortality of the soul as a human privilege. Either this, or Descartes must give some reason to support a material soul for animals, while still maintaining an incorporeal one for humans. Gassendi knows that Descartes denies language and reasoning abilities to animals, but he thinks that he catches Descartes in a contradiction when he claims that the brain is responsible for sensation and imagination, and must either pronounce animals possessors of a soul of the same nature as the human soul, or divest them of all sensation and imagination. The second option appears untenable to Gassendi.

That three of the four articles in the *instantia* following Descartes's response to his sixth doubt do not deal with the direct topic of the doubt, the question of the animal soul, but rather to Descartes's provisions for the immateriality of the mind, is another indication that animal nature is not the real question; human nature is always the real topic of concern, and as it concerns Gassendi's animal examples, Descartes's proposal of an immaterial thinking substance that is the human mind/soul is the target of his doubt. Similarities between human and animal bodily structure and behavior allow him to effectively cast doubt upon Descartes's conception of the soul, as he incidentally casts doubt upon his conception of the animal.

The debate in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica* illustrates the enormous gulf between Gassendi and Descartes. René Pintard gives an accurate account of this gulf: "Les deux philosophes ne parlent pas la même langue ; et ils ne s'entendent, quand ils raisonnent, ni sur la méthode, ni sur les prémisses" (484). Thomas M. Lennon notes that Gassendi often takes blame for not engaging Descartes's ideas, but corroborates Pintard's opinion when he states that "the converse seems no less true" (107). Gassendi will never accept Descartes's maxim that whatever

he perceives clearly and distinctly must necessarily be true, and Descartes steadfastly stands behind his method and its conclusions.

Despite their differences, both Descartes and Gassendi acknowledge an immortal soul and the perfection of humanity with respect to animals. Where they differ is in the demarcation that exists between humans and animals. For Descartes it is stark and absolute. Only humans have an immaterial thinking substance, a rational soul, while for Gassendi humans and animals share a common nature, but differ only in terms of “au plus et au moins” à la Montaigne.

Gassendi's Animal

A more exact description of Gassendi's understanding of the relationship between humans and animals appears in François Bernier's *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi*. In Bernier's *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi*, which is a translation and reorganization of Gassendi's corpus, a reader has the chance to see Gassendi's own opinions concerning the nature of the human soul and the nature of animals, although his adherence to the authority of the church clouds much of what he writes about the former. Isabelle Moreau points out that Bernier's *Abrégé* does not present Gassendi's philosophy in its entirety, as the title suggests; rather, Bernier “transmet à ses contemporains ce qu'il faut savoir de la philosophie de Gassendi” (GS 402). According to Moreau what is missing are the fruits of Gassendi's “dialectique humaniste” and his “intentions pédagogiques et concordantistes de l'ecclésiastique” (GS footnote 403).

Additionally, among all his writings pertaining to animals one can find a direct response to Descartes's animal-machine, although his name does not appear in the text. Bernier labels the pertinent passage “Si les Brutes sont de pures Machines” and tellingly includes it in a chapter on the immortality of the soul. Gassendi attributes the idea of the animal-machine not to Descartes

but to “un Espagnol nommé Perera” (Bernier VI 214), evidently the sixteenth-century theologian Benedict Pereira. Contemporaries, “quelques-uns de nos Modernes” as Gassendi puts it, take up the opinion “à l’égard des Brutes, afin, disent-ils, de les mieux distinguer des Hommes” (Bernier VI 214). The reason the idea of the animal-machine appears in a chapter on the immortality of the soul becomes clear when Gassendi divulges the impetus behind the argument for a non-sentient animal.

Ils pretendent donc [...] que si on admet que les Brutes pensent, ou mesme qu’elles ayent du sentiment, quelque grossier et imparfait qu’il puisse estre l’on ne satisfera jamais aux objections de ceux qui veulent que l’Ame de[s] Brutes, et celles des Hommes ne different que selon le plus, et le moins, c’est pourquoy pour se tirer tout d’un coup d’embarras, et sans considerer si le remede qu’ils apportent n’est point pire que le mal, ils soûtiennent avec cet Auteur [Pereira] que les Brutes ne sont que de pures Machines, comme pourroient estre des Horloges, et qu’elles ne voyent, ni n’entendent, ni ne connoissent, ou pour me servir de leurs termes, qu’elles sont destituées de tout sentiment soit exterieur, comme la Veüe, l’Oüye, etc. soit interieur comme la Phantaisie. (Bernier VI 214-15)

Gassendi recognizes that the idea of an animal-machine is merely an attempt to protect religious dogma and not an attempt to present a true account of animal existence that accords with experience. He agrees that the existence of an animal-machine would be useful if there were clear proof of its veracity, but the proposition, he contends, is patently false:

Certainement il seroit à souhaiter qu’on pût bien clairement demontrer ce qu’avance Perera, et ses Sectateurs, parceque cela etabliroit une difference tres considerable entre l’Ame des Brutes, et celles des Hommes; mais quel moyen de demontrer une chose qui paroît si manifestement fausse? Et qui est ce qui en pourra jamais estre persuadé? Ou qui est ce qui pourra jamais croire qu’un Animal qu’on ecorche tout vif, qui crie qui se debat, et qui grince des dents, ne sente pas davantage qu’un morceau de parchemin qu’on dechireroit?” (Bernier VI 215).

Gassendi preserves his piousness by admiring Pereira’s intent, but dissents on the grounds that his argument lacks persuasive power. To illustrate this fact, Gassendi resorts not only to the

example of sensation he deems undeniable in the citation above, but also employs a string of examples that indicate reasoning ability among animals.

Gassendi's initial examples are the web use of spiders, the construction of dams by beavers, and the maternal behavior of hens (Bernier VI 215-16). As complex as some of these behaviors are — Gassendi gives a detailed description of the architecture of a beaver lodge — they still represent what one might term instinctive behaviors. He adds various examples which show that animals can deny instinctive responses, such as a donkey that refuses to advance over the edge of a cliff no matter how hard its master beats it. This, he claims, demonstrates its ability to reason despite its reputation for being the stupidest animal:

Mais pour vous faire souvenir de l'exemple de l'Animal qu'on pretend estre le plus sot de tous les Animaux; quand on a conduit un Asne jusques sur le bord d'un precipice, on a beau le battre, on a beau pousser la Machine à coup de pieds, elle n'avancera jamais, il ne precipitera jamais, mais ou il suspendra son mouvement, encore qu'il soit porté, ebranlé, et déterminé vers le precipice, ou il se detournera mesme enfin si on le presse trop, et retournera sur ses pas, tant il est vray qu'il connoit le danger, qu'il a quelque pressentiment du mal qui luy arriveroit s'il se precipitoit, et qu'il semble preferer les coups, et la douleur presente à une future! (217)

In addition to the extensive list of examples that Gassendi provides, he maintains the possibility of a great number more: “Je pourroy icy rapporter cent autres particularitez des Animaux qui toutes seroient des marques authentiques de leur connoissance” (218). All of these examples of animal reasoning suggest the falsehood of the animal-machine theory.

Gassendi makes it clear that he does not mean to say that animals reason exactly as humans, but Leonora Cohen Rosenfield notes that for Gassendi “the difference between animal and human reasoning is one of degree and not of kind” (10). Just as in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*, he upholds the superiority of human reasoning ability, which operates at a higher degree of perfection than that of animals:

Mais quoy, disent-ils, en voulez vous donc faire des Animaux qui soient proprement et absolument Raisonnables comme les Hommes? Non assurément; car quelque perfection que nous remarquons dans leurs actions, elles paroissent toujours si basses, et si imparfaites au regard de celles des Hommes, qu'on est contraint d'avouer qu'elles partent d'un principe tout à fait different... (Bernier VI 218)

A “principe tout à fait different” implies more than a difference of degrees, and when Gassendi details the gap between human and animal reasoning abilities, the differences are considerable enough to support that conclusion:

...elles sont incapables de parvenir par le Raisonnement à la connoissance des choses incorporelles, de se reflechir sur leurs propres actions, qui est une des principales marques du vray Raisonnement; de faire des abstractions, et de raisonner sur les choses universelles; de connoitre le Bien honneste, et de le suivre abandonnant le Bien sensible; et qu'enfin elles sont sans liberté, et toujours déterminées à une certaine chose selon les mouvemens divers et necessaires de la matiere dont elles sont et composées, et agitées. (Bernier VI 218-19)

There is little difference between Gassendi's animal and a machine. The description above sheds some light on the role of the will Gassendi purports in animal impulsive actions. If the animal has understanding, it cannot reflect upon that understanding. If it knows the relationship of cause to effect, as in the example Gassendi gives concerning a dog that reaches a desired food item by mounting items nearby to reach it (Bernier VI 217), it is nonetheless drawn to the food item mechanically. If one applies Gassendi's limitations to the case of the donkey that refuses to plunge over a precipice, the donkey's will is apparent in its denial of the impulse to advance that its master's blows represent, and it chooses the pain of the blows over that of the fall from a height, this latter because it has an understanding of the peril that faces it. Nonetheless the whole process is deterministic in nature because of the completely material nature of the beast.

Gassendi's animal is a machine, but apparently not “purement” machine because he allows for animal sensation, imagination, and understanding, even though the last he limits to non-abstract and non-reflexive functions. Olivier Bloch even notes similarities between Gassendi's proofs of

the gap between human and animal intellectual abilities in the *Syntagma Philosophicum* and those found in Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* (403-04). Despite human perfections and Gassendi's description implying a difference of kind rather than degrees, he reaffirms that the difference between human and animal mental abilities is not enough to warrant a distinction of kind to humans: "Il est vray, disent les plus Zelez, qu'il y a une grande difference entre les operations des Brutes, et celles des Hommes, mais cela ne semble pas suffire pour etabliir une difference specifique entre elles et nous" (Bernier VI 219). Gassendi thus concurs with Montaigne that humans are animals, and as Rosenfield points out, "Man is simply the highest type of animal" (10). His description of animal abilities, nonetheless, does contradict his conclusion to some extent.

Aside from the differences that do exist between Gassendi's animal and the "purement" machine animal, and the evidence for falsehood of the animal-machine, Gassendi does have another reason for combatting the idea. Since he believes that the opinion exists only to support Christian dogma, he worries that perceived need of such a support undermines the church. He finds the animal-machine just as dangerous for religion as Descartes finds the rational animal:

Certainement je ne porte point envie à leur zele, j'ay deja dit qu'il seroit à souhaiter que cela se peust bien demontrer, mais cependant je les prie de prendre garde, comme j'ay aussi deja insinué, que le remede qu'ils veulent apporter ne soit pire que le mal, et que ce ne soit, comme je pense, une des plus dangereuse[s] Doctrine[s] qui puisse[nt] estre introduite[s] dans le Christianisme: Car de prendre à tasche comme ils font de detruire toutes les raisons sur lesquelles les Philosophes, et les Theologiens ont jusques icy etabli la difference specifique de l'Ame Humaine, et de celle des Brutes, et de soutenir que si l'on n'admet pas que les Brutes soient insensibles, l'on soit obligé d'admettre qu'elles sont de mesme Categorie que nous, ou que nous sommes donc de mesme Categorie qu'elles; c'est vouloir fonder cette difference, c'est à dire la spiritualité de l'Ame humaine, sur l'Insensibilité des Brutes, ou ce qui est le mesme, c'est vouloir fonder un article de Foy sur un principe qu'ils ne prouvent par aucune raison, qui paroît evidemment faux, qu'ils ne persuaderont jamais à personne, et dont ils ne sont apparemment point persuadez eux mesmes, ce qui est asseurement sinon un tres malicieux, du moins tres dangereux Dessein: Comme si la Religion ne pouvait

plus subsister sans ce beau et nouveau principe, *Les Brutes ne sentent point, les Brutes ne sont que de pures Machines!* Admirable fondement de la plus importante verité du Christianisme! (Bernier VI 219-20)

In essence, Gassendi states that it is below the church to use animal nature to found religious truths. His argument illustrates how reason can cut both ways, as Descartes is among those who declare the rational animal dangerous for Christianity, and Gassendi holds the same to be true of the animal-machine. Gassendi does not object to the distinction made between human and animal spirituality, and so his philosophy offers evidence that a rational animal can coexist with an immortal soul exclusive to humans.

To understand how this is possible in Gassendi's case, one needs to examine his theories of the soul. Bernier's presentation of Gassendi's philosophy of the soul consists of three chapters. The first deals with the question of the materiality or immateriality of the soul, the second is on the nature of the animal soul, and the third is on the nature of the human soul. These divisions show the importance of the materiality/immateriality of the soul and the distinction between humans and animals that differences in the soul represent to Gassendi's philosophy. Gassendi's task is difficult, because despite the similarity between humans and animals he admits, his philosophy must allow for some difference to justify the immortality of the human soul. Even more difficult is any suggestion that implies the materiality of the human soul, for the official position of the church is that the soul is incorporeal. Gassendi must avow his adherence to church dogma even as he questions it. Accordingly, just such an avowal appears in Bernier's chapter on the question of the materiality or immateriality of the soul.

The chapter opens, however, with a denial that exact knowledge of the soul is Gassendi's goal: "Si nous entreprenons icy de traiter de l'Ame, comme la marque interieure par laquelle les Animaux sont distinguez du reste des corps, ce n'est point tant que nous esperions de connoitre

sa nature, que parce qu'on ne doit pas ignorer jusques où les Philosophes ont en cela poussé leurs connoissances" (Bernier V 291). Gassendi's strategy, therefore is to display the opinions of antiquity regarding the nature of the soul, among which are both those for and against its immateriality. The declarations of several classical minds on the impenetrability of the soul precedes Gassendi's own assertion of the same which he rests on the limitations of human reason to which the disagreement among philosophers attests: "cette grande discorde des Philosophes fait assez voir qu'il n'est rien de plus foible, de plus obscur, de plus inconstant [than human reason]; ce n'est pas que la veritable raison soit contraire à ce que l'Esprit de Dieu definit, mais l'Esprit humain fragile, et chancelant raisonne ordinairement mal lorsqu'il est abandonné à luy-mesme" (Bernier V 293). This comment serves to buttress Gassendi's disclaimer at the opening of the chapter.

Gassendi does make a pronouncement on the nature of the soul before his list of philosophical opinions on the matter, not based on human reasoning but rather on faith:

La Foy nous enseigne une chose dont nous ne devons point douter, asçavoir *Que l'Ame humaine est une substance incorporelle, et immortelle, qui n'est point tirée de l'essence Divine, ni de quelque domicile Celeste où elle existast auparavant; mais qu'elle est cré[é]e de rien, multipliée selon le nombre des corps, existante par soy, et essentiellement forme.* C'est ainsi que les derniers Conciles l'ont défini. (Bernier V 292)

Here is a very precise account of the soul that accords with Descartes's immaterial and immortal version fairly well, and that no one should doubt according to Gassendi. Yet he follows this definition with a remark that undermines the authority of the church's pronouncement by ingenuously bringing to light its conflict with earlier church opinion: "De sorte que les SS.Peres, S.Hierôme, S.Augustin, S.Gregoire, ne peuvent plus dire à l'égard de l'Origine de l'Ame, *Qu'ils n'en ont rien de certain, rien qui soit defini, que cette question e[s]t indissoluble dans cette vie, et autres choses semblables*" (Bernier V 292). He even connects these opinions indirectly with

heresy: “La chose nous est maintenant marquée, et définie, l’Eglise ne souffrant pas que nous balancions entre tant de differentes Opinions de Philosophes, et d’Heretiques” (Bernier V 292-93). These remarks in tandem with his superficial affirmation of the official stance of the church are representative of his technique throughout the chapter on the question of the materiality or immateriality of the soul. He never departs from a position of complete propriety, in line with church dogma, but supplies evidence that gives reason to doubt the dogma to which he defers.

The extent to which Gassendi deviates from church dogma and the sincerity of his religious convictions are a matter of debate, but Olivier Bloch demonstrates that his faith is real, as are his efforts to reconcile a materialist philosophy with his religion (299 et passim). Some matters lie purely in the realm of faith, and Gassendi places them “au-dessus de toute discussion” (Bloch 320). Gassendi’s treatment of the soul, however, appears to question a religious doctrine that contradicts observation and experience, although he ostensibly accepts the immortality of the soul.

He dutifully reports a quantity of philosophical opinions in favor of the incorporeal soul such as Pythagorus, Plato, and Aristotle. In addition, he also includes the heretical Manicheans and he closes his presentation of Aristotle’s immaterial soul with a couple of off-hand objections (Bernier V 298). His list of those who support the corporeal soul is much more extensive, thus already throwing some doubt on the immaterial soul by the sheer weight of the opinions to the contrary. The group consists of Diogenes, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Archelaus, Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, Hippocrates, and Zenon and the Stoics (Bernier V 298-99). Speaking of Epicurus, Gassendi takes the opportunity to show that common opinion both agrees and disagrees with his corporeal soul, depending on whether it is the human or animal soul that is in question: “quoy qu’on accorde à Epicure que l’Ame est Corporelle à l’égard des Brutes, on ne

[le] luy accordera point à l'égard de l'Ame humaine, principalement entant quelle est Raisonnable, Esprit, Entendement, comme nous dirons ensuite plus au long" (Bernier V 299-300). To counterbalance this approval of Epicurus, Gassendi reminds his readers that he elsewhere demonstrates the weakness of Epicurus' argument for the necessity of a material soul (Bernier V 299). Gassendi's views regarding Epicurus are important for his own speculation concerning the soul that occurs in the following chapters.

The reader leaves the first chapter with a foreshadowing of Gassendi's two-part human soul. He writes, "il ne faut que distinguer deux choses en nous avec Philon, asçavoir l'Animal, et l'Homme, l'Animal acause de l'Ame par laquelle nous vivons, et qui nous est commune avec les Brutes, et l'Homme acause de l'Entendement par lequel nous raisonnons et qui est spirituel, et l'image de Dieu" (Bernier V 300). This dual understanding of humanity includes a material component, but Gassendi is careful not to openly contradict the church's definition of the soul that appears earlier in the chapter. He simply supplies some reason to doubt current religious dogma in the form of earlier church opinion that supports the materiality of the soul:

Je ne diray rien icy des SS.Peres qui ont cru que l'Ame humaine mesme estoit Corporelle; on sçait bien qu'avant que l'Eglise eust défini la chose dans les dernier Siecles, c'estoit une Opinion assez commune; il n'y a qu'à voir les paroles que se lisent dans les anciens Conciles: *Des Anges et des Archanges, et de leurs puissances ausquelles j'ajoute nos Ames, cecy est le sentiment de l'Eglise Catholique; que veritablement ils sont intelligibles, mais qu'ils ne sont pourtant pas invisibles, et destituez de tous corps, comme vous autres Gentils le croyez, car ils ont un corps fort delié soit d'air, soit de feu.* Tertullien devoit estre de ce sentiment lors qu'il soutenoit, *que l'Ame ne seroit rien si elle n'estoit corps, et que tout ce qui est, ou existe est corps à sa maniere.* D'où vient que S.Augustin dit de Tertullien qu'il a cru que l'Ame estoit corps, *par ce qu'il n'a pû la concevoir incorporelle, et qu'ainsi il craignoit que si elle n'estoit corps, elle ne fust rien.* (Bernier V 300-01)

Gassendi says more than "rien" by concluding his treatment of the human soul with examples of earlier church opinion in support of its materiality. While reading between the lines, Gassendi's

own doubt concerning the church's contemporary position seeps through, and the reader is undoubtedly more willing to accept Gassendi's rendering of the human soul and its similarities and contrasts with the soul of animals.

Gassendi defines the animal soul, speaking only of living creatures other than humans, is that force "qui estant dans le corps fait que l'Animal est dit vivre, et exister, comme il est dit mourir lorsqu'elle cesse d'y estre" (Bernier 303). He rejects the opinions he treats in his discussion of the immateriality or materiality of the soul that support an immaterial animal soul (Bernier V 304). He speculates that the animal soul is "quelque substance tres tenue, et comme la fleur de la matiere" (Bernier V 304). Gassendi provides reasons that essentially amount to the warmth of the living body and its connection to the movement of small units of matter to support his conclusion that the animal soul is

...une espece de feu tres tenu, ou une espece de petite flamme, qui tant qu'elle est en vigueur, ou qu'elle demeure allumée, fait la vie de l'Animal, lequel meurt lorsqu'elle s'eteint, que pour cela il faut que dans le reste du corps il y ait de petites cavitez, et de petis passages libres et ouverts dans lesquelles ce petit feu, ou cette petite flamme puisse se mouvoir librement... (Bernier V 305)

The animal soul is a material substance that spreads itself throughout the body and is responsible for all basic life functions. What the animal soul lacks is the immortal reasoning soul of humans, what Gassendi refers to in his discussion of the animal soul as "l'Entendement immortel" (Bernier V 303).

This is the great difference between the human soul and the animal soul. The corporeal soul is of "only one kind" but "exists in more and less perfect versions" according to Lolordo (203). The differences in degrees between animal souls implies the possibility of a corporeal human soul that differs from animals' only by degree of perfection. Lolordo claims that this is the case of plants and animals in Gassendi's philosophy, the soul of each not differing in kind but

rather degree of functionality, animals' souls being capable of both vegetative and sensitive functions (203). Gassendi may then be a philosopher who does not categorically consider all animals the same, allowing for greater and lesser degrees of perfection between animal species, and therefore greater and lesser reasoning and language abilities. As such he breaks from traditional Western philosophy as Derrida portrays it in *L'Animal que donc je suis*, which characteristically lumps all animals together and deprives them of their difference.

Gassendi's examination of the human soul begins with a strong statement in favor of an immaterial immortal soul, but as in his treatment of the immateriality of the soul elsewhere, he tempers his stance by noting the difficulty that accompanies the position:

Il nous faut maintenant parler de l'Ame Humaine, à l'égard de laquelle la Foy, et la Raison nous obligent de raisonner autrement qu'à l'égard des autres. Car si les libertins qui ne craignent point de passer pour Impies, et pour temeraires, disent en un mot que l'Ame humaine ne differe de celle des Brutes que selon le plus ou le moins, et qu'elle est corporelle, ceux qui reconnoissent que non seulement elle est capable des dons surnaturels et immortels, mais aussi qu'elle est douée d'une faculté d'entendre, et de raisonner qui n'appartient nullement aux autres Animaux, la tiennent Incorporelle, et croient qu'elle tire son origine immédiatement de Dieu. Cependant une chose peut faire quelque difficulté; c'est que l'Ame de l'homme est non seulement raisonnante, et intelligente, par où l'on peut dire qu'elle est distinguée de celle des Brutes, et qu'elle est Incorporelle, et l'ouvrage de la main de Dieu, mais de plus qu'elle est sensitive, et vegetative, ce qui luy est commun avec l'Ame des Brutes, et qui pourroit donner lieu de croire qu'elle seroit corporelle... (Bernier V 313)

The difficulty is the same that Gassendi points out to Descartes, that similarities between humans and animals argue for a soul of the same nature. A theory of the human soul must take these similarities into account. Gassendi resolves the problem by attributing two souls to humans, the sensitive soul, which it has in common with animals, and the rational soul, which belongs to humanity alone. The sensitive soul is material, and the rational soul immaterial and immortal (Bernier V 315).

Gassendi sees two principal advantages to the theory of two souls. The first is that it accords well with Christian doctrine:

Or que l'Ame humaine soit composée de deux parties, l'une Raisnable, et l'autre Irraisnable, c'est ce qui s'accorde merveilleusement avec les Theologiens, lorsqu'ils distinguent dans nostre Ame deux parties, l'une superieure, l'autre inferieure, appuyant specialement leur distinction sur ces paroles de l'Apostre, *Je vois dans mes membres une autre Loy qui repugne à la Loy de mon Esprit*. Car comme une mesme et simple chose ne peut pas se contrarier à elle mesme, il semble que de ce combat qui est entre le Sens, et l'Esprit, ou l'Entendement, l'on doit inferer que l'Esprit, et le Sens, c'est à dire l'Ame Raisnable, et la Sensitive sont choses differentes. (Bernier V 317)

The second advantage is that it accounts for both the resemblances and differences between humans and animals without contradiction by attributing a sensitive soul to both and a reasoning soul only to humans. It also has religious benefits:

...on peut commodement expliquer par là [the two-soul system] comment il se peut faire que l'homme à l'égard d'une partie ait esté fait un peu moindre que les Anges, et subsiste par cette partie apres le trepas, et a l'égard de l'autre, qu'il ne differe en rien des Brutes, et ayt la mesme destinée que les Chevaux, et autres semblables Animaux, ensorte qu'il soit dit selon la premiere vivre une vie intellectuelle, et Angelique, et selon la derniere une vie Animale, et pareille à celle des Bestes, selon la premiere estre fait à l'image, et à la ressemblance de Dieu, et selon la derniere estre comparable, et semblable aux Chevaux, aux Chiens, et aux autres Animaux qui n'ont point de raison. (Bernier V 317-18)

Gassendi's human being is, like Descartes's, somewhere between angels and animals, and like Descartes's possesses an immortal, incorporeal soul. Unlike Descartes's human being, Gassendi's also possesses a material soul that accounts for life functions, sensation, and imagination.

The division between human and animal mental functions is not as abrupt in terms of the soul, since animals also possess a sensitive soul and are capable of sensation and imagination, even understanding of a certain kind, as Gassendi's example of the mule that will not jump over a precipice attempts to illustrate. In the end, however, Gassendi's animal is not that far removed

from Descartes animal-machine. Despite their ability to communicate, to imagine, etc., animals' operative powers do not exceed the domain of the sensitive soul and they therefore do not quite qualify as reasoning beings: "Concluons donc à l'égard des Brutes, qu'on n'en peut véritablement pas faire des Animaux qui puissent proprement, et absolument estre dits Raisonables [...] mais qu'après tant de marques de sentiment et de connoissance, nous ne pouvons pas aussi en faire de pures Machines insensibles" (Bernier VI 223). Gassendi's debate with Descartes is more about the differences in the faculties and properties that each attributes to the rational soul and the possession of a material sensitive soul by humans than about the abilities of animals.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the discussion of animals in Gassendi's *Disquisitio Metaphysica* does not have the disclosure of animal nature as its primary goal. Instead, Gassendi uses animals rhetorically to question Descartes's method and its conclusions, particularly his proofs for an immaterial soul exclusive to humans. Furthermore, an examination of Gassendi's own philosophy of animal nature as it appears in Bernier's *Abrégé de la philosophie de Gassendi* indicates that it does not differ significantly from Descartes's. This is further indication that animal nature is not the real issue of debate when Gassendi evokes animals in the *Disquisitio*. Gassendi's philosophy of the soul, however, implies that he doubted the existence of an immaterial soul. Gassendi's doubt adds weight to the hypothesis that the real matter of debate when discussions of animal nature take place is the nature of the soul.

This is important because the Gassendi-Descartes controversy marks a shift in the rhetorical use of animals in French texts containing debates over human nature. Previous texts

such as Montaigne's *Essais* and Le Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens* employ animals rhetorically mainly to erect a non-anthropocentric conception of the universe. Descartes's rhetorical use of animals in the *Discours de la méthode* to establish the immateriality of the soul and Gassendi's rhetorical use of animals in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica* to question Descartes's conclusion forge a bond between questions of the nature of the soul and animal nature. Following the Gassendi-Descartes controversy, debates over the nature of the human soul in seventeenth-century French texts incite the rhetorical use of animals, as seen in Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* and Foigny's *La Terre australe connue*.

CHAPTER 5: CYRANO DE BERGERAC'S *L'AUTRE MONDE*

While past scholarship on *L'Autre monde*²⁰ discusses many of the issues in which animals play an important role, the purpose of this chapter is to signal two specific uses of animals in the text in order to place it in a general timeline with the other texts this dissertation treats. The first is the role of animals in defining Cyrano's position on anthropocentrism which aligns *L'Autre monde* with Montaigne's "Apologie" and La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens*. A non-anthropocentric universe is a principal theme of the text, and this chapter will treat the two trials Cyrano's protagonist faces on the moon and the sun as the foremost examples of the employment of animals to deliver this message. This is not to discount its other functions or other researchers' interpretations, but rather an attempt to focus on the most striking and well-developed use of animals in the text. Where *L'Autre monde* differs from the works of La Mothe Le Vayer and Montaigne is in the central position animals play when the question of whether or not the human soul is immaterial and immortal arises.

This second use of animals occurs during a debate between Cyrano's protagonist and a young inhabitant of the moon. The importance of this episode is in the prominent appearance of animals in the debate coming from a text whose construction dates from the time of the Gassendi-Descartes controversy in which comparisons to animals are likewise central. What Cyrano's actual position was on the nature of the soul is inconsequential in the case of the present investigation. Jacques Prévot has called for caution when assigning a firm philosophy to Cyrano de Bergerac, and he along with Madeleine Alcover and Jean-Charles Darmon view the

²⁰ A heavily edited form of *Les Etats et empires de la lune* appeared in 1657, *Les Etats et empires du soleil* in 1662 (Adam 159).

author as primarily a writer and not a true philosopher. Even before Prévot's exposition of the poetic nature of Cyrano's novel in his *Cyrano de Bergerac romancier* (130-32), Alcover reminds her readers that he is "plus poète que philosophe" (159). Alcover does favor an atheistic, materialistic interpretation of *L'Autre monde* and Alexandra Torero-Ibad develops at length a philosophical system from Cyrano's text along those same atheistic and materialist lines, but it is the nature of the debate and not the conclusion that is important to this chapter.

The assumption in this dissertation is that Jacques Prévot is correct when he characterizes *L'Autre monde* as a "roman des lectures de son auteur" (CBEC 247). Prévot discerns that when the protagonist arrives on the moon, "[il] est soumis par ses interlocuteurs aux discours des philosophes de l'Antiquité dans l'ordre même où ils apparaissent dans le *De rerum natura* de Lucrèce" which culminates in "le triomphe du discours épicurien" (CBEC 247). The first book of *L'Autre monde* is correspondingly Epicurean in its outlook, but this does not necessitate an Epicurean philosophy from its author. In the second book, *Les États et empires du soleil*, Prévot attributes the "lecture du monde" to Campanella's *Realis Philosophia Epilogistica, De Sensu Rerum et Magia*, and *Civitas Solis*. As the book progresses, Campanella gives way to Descartes's *Principia Philosophiae*. Prévot's reading accords with the structure of the text and accounts for the contradictory philosophical opinions of the novel's numerous characters.

The burlesque treatment given the philosophical views present in the text serves to question their veracity, and can give the appearance of developing a counter-philosophy that one can attribute to Cyrano; the efforts of Alcover and Torero-Ibad are not without foundation. Their arguments, however, rely on selectively applying philosophical viewpoints of fictional characters in a novel to its author. Given the myriad of philosophical opinions present in the text, this is a dubious process. Rather than assuming a specific philosophical stance, Cyrano may very well

mean to question all philosophical endeavor. The text therefore serves a broadly skeptical function that includes the rhetorical use of animals to question the notion of an anthropocentric universe.

Jacques Prévot supports this reading of the text by highlighting the various ways *L'Autre monde* challenges the central position of humankind in the universe in his *Cyrano de Bergerac romancier*: The presence of life on the moon, sun, and other worlds annihilates the privileged position humans imagine for themselves and the Earth (39-40), the exposition of the commonality of the material components of humans and all other life belies human superiority(41-42), as do arguments in favor of animal, and even plant superiority (41). Cyrano's *L'Autre monde* questions the distinction between humans and animals that is pivotal for holding an anthropocentric position. Cyrano "revient sans cesse sur la part de l'animal en nous, sur notre constitution matérielle...Cyrano amplifie le thème de notre nature biologique" (44). The conclusion that Cyrano's text supports is that there is nothing about human biology that supports an anthropocentric view.

This means that the human form and its upright stature are not an appropriate basis for establishing human superiority. *L'Autre monde* also opposes the use of other characteristics not necessarily tied to the body to distinguish humans from animals, such as language use, and reasoning ability. Cyrano presents creatures capable of speech and reasoning ability, as well as upright locomotion. Likewise, a republic of reasoning, language-using, bipedal birds exists on the sun. Cyrano removes the exclusivity of these ostensibly human traits, thus preventing claims to human superiority based on the privilege of these abilities.

Cyrano's text is part of the skeptical tradition extending from Montaigne through Charron and La Mothe Le Vayer that employs animals to humble humanity. Where Cyrano's text parts

from a predecessor like La Mothe Le Vayer is in the important role animals play in discussions of the nature of the human soul. Cyrano constructed *Les États et empires de la lune* while the Gassendi-Descartes controversy raged and the question of the soul of animals and its relationship to the human soul was topical.

This chapter will show how Cyrano's use of animals in *L'Autre monde* challenges an anthropocentric understanding of the universe by blurring the lines that distinguish humans and animals and controverting arguments for human superiority. The practice of employing animals to oppose anthropocentrism is most evident in the two trials Cyrano's protagonist faces on the moon and sun, respectively, and the protagonist's early encounter with Native Americans in the New World that anticipates these trials. Accordingly, these passages form the subject of the bulk of the remainder of this chapter.

In addition, this chapter will note the occurrence of animals in the discussion of the nature of the soul that takes place between Dyrcona²¹ and a moon youth. The significance of this passage is the front and center position that animals play in the debate, which I interpret as part of change in the role of animals in the discussion of the human soul that Isabelle Moreau notices and attributes to the Gassendi-Descartes controversy (GS 452).

The New World and Animal Language and Reasoning

²¹ For the sake of simplicity, in this dissertation Dyrcona signifies the protagonist of both *Les États et empires de la lune* and *Les États et empires du soleil*, although Cyrano only uses the name in the second book. It is tempting to view this near-acronym of "Cyrano de" as an attempt by the author to safely detach himself from the controversial material of his text, but the name is possibly an homage to Tristan L'Hermite's *Le Page disgracié*. The protagonist of Tristan's novel has no name in the early chapters of the book that display the influence of Mercury over his life, but as he enters adolescence and comes under the influence of Venus, he assumes the name Ariston, a near-acronym of Tristan. Likewise, the protagonist of Cyrano's novel has no name during his adventures on the moon, but is known as Dyrcona in the book that details his journey to the sun.

Before the protagonist of *L'Autre monde* ever visits extra-terrestrial worlds, his initial experiment with a flying machine lands him in North America. His first encounter in this new world is with the Native American population, and the interaction that takes place sheds light on the question of animal reasoning and language, and anticipates Dyrcona's travails on the moon. In all of his journeys, Dyrcona comes under the scrutiny of the intelligent inhabitants of the lands he visits. Cyrano reverses the roles of examiner and examined, and although Dyrcona's first encounter is with Native Americans and not animals, it exhibits the turning of the tables that Leonora Cohen Rosenfield speaks of regarding the place of humans and animals during Dyrcona's stay on the moon (115):

Ils parurent fort surpris de ma rencontre ; car j'étais le premier, à ce que je pense, qu'ils eussent jamais vu habillé de bouteilles ; et pour renverser encore toutes les interprétations qu'ils auraient pu donner à cet équipage, ils voyaient qu'en marchant je ne touchais presque point à la terre : aussi ne savaient-ils pas qu'au premier branle que je donnais à mon corps, l'ardeur des rayons de midi me soulevait avec ma rosée, et sans que mes fioles n'étaient plus en assez grand nombre, j'eusse été, possible, à leur vue enlevé dans les airs. (48)

Dyrcona imagines the reactions of the Native Americans to his appearance and in so doing assumes the reasonableness of the "sauvages" (48) that surround him. He imagines even that they might give some reasonable interpretation to his appearance, save for the fact that the nature of his accoutrement causes him to advance as if walking on air. He seems to concede that the novelty of his appearance and gait justly prevents them from finding a reasonable explanation for his existence.

The Native Americans observe Dyrcona as they might a machine whose workings are unknown to them. Dyrcona's actions set off a chain of reactions that account for the strange appearance of his locomotion. What prevents the Native Americans from being able to interpret their observations scientifically is a lack of understanding of the parts of the machine Dyrcona

represents. The Native Americans do not share the knowledge that both Dyrcona and the reader hold, therefore Dyrcona's floating bottle-covered body is not, in Jacques Prévot's words concerning Dyrcona's mechanisms, "réductible à la raison" as it would be if they held that mechanical knowledge (CBEC 257). The Native Americans struggle to identify and classify Dyrcona.

The problem of Dyrcona's definition is a theme that recurs in both his visit to the moon and the sun. In her *Libertine Strategies*, Joan DeJean relates Dyrcona's "problems of taxonomy" to the position of the libertine who continually adopts masks in order to protect himself from persecution or becomes the victim of masks imposed by others (130-132). Although this is an interesting way to interpret Dyrcona's trials that possibly gives insight into libertine psychology, the difficulty in defining Dyrcona is part of the larger question of human nature and the place of humans in the universe. In the case of Dyrcona's encounter with Native Americans, the Native Americans display their similarity to animals by the expression of their emotions. Despite their ability to reason, in the face of Dyrcona's miraculous appearance they react according to their passions, as animals: "Je les voulus aborder ; mais comme si la frayeur les eût changés en oiseaux, un moment les vit perdre dans la forêt prochaine" (48). The passions overcome reason, and the natives are birds and no longer humans. They flee the vicinity of the "chaumière," where Dyrcona has seen smoke, the implicit fire and the constructed dwelling serving as signs of human civilization, to take refuge in the woods, the abode of beasts. The link between the passions and animality may indicate a prejudice on the part of the narrator who, conversely, associates reasoning with humanity.

Despite their animal-like fear, Dyrcona hopes to establish communication with the natives, attempting to profit from the inability of one feeble old man to escape. Dyrcona believes

himself to be in the vicinity of Paris, which allows Cyrano to satirize the incongruity of holding one culture's means of communication as standard for another. His protagonist addresses the old man in French and poses a series of questions that have little sense given the real state of events: "Je lui demandais avec beaucoup de la peine (car j'étais essoufflé), combien on comptait de là à Paris, depuis quand en France le monde allait tout nu, et pourquoi ils me fuyaient avec tant d'épouvante" (48). Dyrcona uses what constitutes unarguably a language to express what are reasonable questions from his own point of view, but which are incomprehensible and would be nonsensical, in the case of the first two, or obvious, in the case of the last, even if comprehensible for his interlocutor.

This, however, does not mean that the old man is without language, but his communication is just as mystifying for Dyrcona as are Dyrcona's words for him: "Il marmotta longtemps, mais je ne discernai point qu'il articulât rien; de façon que je pris son langage pour le gazouillement d'un muet" (48). Dyrcona is unable to make sense of the sounds the old man emits, but he nonetheless characterizes them as language, tacitly affirming that there is language where he is unable to perceive it.

The situation has bearing on the debate over animal language examined in earlier chapters. Montaigne contends in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" that it is possible that animals have language but that humans are unable to understand, while Descartes believes that if animals could reason that they could also make their thoughts known to humans. In this case, Dyrcona and the old man both use language, but are unable to communicate despite this fact. What remains to be seen is if the two can learn one another's language or arrange to communicate by signs, in either case unequivocally establishing their reasoning ability. There is

nothing in the passage to indicate either a Montaignian or Cartesian position, which perhaps indicates Cyrano's hesitancy to adopt one or the other.

The arrival of French soldiers interrupts the proceedings, but Cyrano's employ of "gazouillement" to describe the old man's speech, a word commonly used to describe birdsong, connects the episode to the question of animal language, fortifying the impression of the natives as birds that the author makes when he describes their flight to the woods. It is possible that Cyrano means to leave the state of events as the question of animal language itself stands, with no advanced communication existing between the two sides in the other's vocal idiom, but with the possibility intact that animals do have a spoken language parallel to human speech. Given this speculative reading, the mutual inability of the two sides to understand one another would put as much onus on humans to understand animal language and find a means to communicate as it does on animals to find means to communicate with humans. This agrees with Montaigne's position in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" and is in opposition to Descartes. As a result, it is possible to interpret the text as questioning the privileged status that Descartes awards to humans. It is again pertinent to remember the caution that Prévot advocates when it comes to assigning a definite philosophical position to Cyrano, remembering that unlike Montaigne's *Essais* or Descartes's *Discours*, *L'Autre monde* is a work of fiction, and the text itself presents various possibilities of interpretation. Cyrano himself may or may not have intended to make a statement about the language and reasoning abilities of animals with Dyrcona's encounter with Native Americans; regardless, the passage presents a way of considering the issue.

The Privileges of Humanity on Trial among the Moon Men

When Dyrcona disembarks on the moon he finds his own reasoning and language abilities in question, and correspondingly, his humanity. After landing in the garden of Eden, Dyrcona's ingestion of the fruit of knowledge symbolizes his transformation from guest worthy of divine ascension to creature somewhere between the angels and animals. While scholars such as Prévot have examined this passage as a parody, or "travestissement" as he refers to it, of Genesis with the function of criticizing the literal interpretation of the Bible (CBR 126-27), or as in the case of Claudine Poulouin of questioning the authority of the text by employing "une écriture burlesque" to liberate human thought from an oppressive literary work (22), the focus here will be on how Dyrcona's ingestion of the fruit of knowledge situates him between the divine and the purely animal and the resulting problem of his definition.

Dyrcona's guide in the garden of Eden, Hélié, explains the properties of the fruit whose ingestion symbolizes Dyrcona's place in the universe: "la plupart des fruits qui pendent à ce végétant sont environnés d'une écorce de laquelle si vous tâtez, vous descendrez au-dessous de l'homme, au lieu que le dedans vous fera monter aussi haut que l'ange" (72). Dyrcona filches one of the apples and as a result of his hunger, carelessly consumes both flesh and peel. Consequently, he does not achieve the rank of angel, but he does not fall completely into the category of animal, if we understand those beings "au-dessous de l'homme" to be animals. The narrator's choice of words gives the reader reason to believe this is the case: "je me suis figuré que cette écorce ne m'avait pas tout à fait abruti, à cause que mes dents la traversèrent et se sentirent un peu du jus de dedans, dont l'énergie avait dissipé les malignités de la pelure" (75). Dyrcona is not completely "abruti," has not completely become a brute, a beast. That he is not completely "abruti" implies that there is a partial transformation which signals his affinity with

animals. That the moon's inhabitants mistake him for an animal is further evidence of Dyrcona's animality.

Following his ingestion of the fruit, Dyrcona must prove his humanity. His efforts center around language and reasoning ability. Ironically, Dyrcona is skeptical of the moon inhabitants' ability to reason at his initial encounter with them. His skepticism is the result of his prejudices for the human form which attach reason to bipedal creatures alone. It is the posture of the moon's inhabitants that he first remarks. He notes that they have "la taille, la figure et le visage comme nous," but that their lower bodies must more closely resemble animals, for he adds, "Cette aventure me fit souvenir de ce que jadis j'avais ouï conter à ma nourrice, des sirènes, des faunes et des satyres," and he refers to them as "bêtes-hommes" (75). Their bodily form renders the visitor incapable of determining whether or not he is dealing with men or beasts, and it is only when he sees their city, a sign of civilization, that he decides in favor of men, remarking on the incongruity of humanity coupled with quadrupedal locomotion: "je fus bien étonné, lorsque je reconnus en effet que c'étaient des hommes, de n'en rencontrer pas un qui ne marchât à quatre pattes" (76). Dyrcona's unusual encounter causes him to reevaluate his conception of humanity. The moon men are, in effect, humans with the hindquarters of animals who move about on all fours. Dyrcona decides that they are men, thereby indicating that, for him at least, civilization trumps erect posture.

Just as their visitor doubts the moon men's humanity because of their four-leggedness, they doubt his, seeing him standing on only two feet. The first indication of Dyrcona's struggle to come is the sensation of otherness he feels in the presence of seven or eight hundred of the moon people who express their curiosity: "De temps en temps ils élevaient des huées si furieuses, causées sans doute par l'admiration de me voir, que je croyais quasi être devenu

monstre” (75). Dyrcona’s comment highlights the relativity of monstrosity. Jean Serroy considers the monstrosity of humanity a general theme of Dyrcona’s sojourn’s on the moon and, particularly, the sun. In each case “l’homme se voit accus[é] de pervertir la loi universelle” (RR 431). In this case, quadrupeds represent the “loi universelle” on the moon, and the bipedal visitor is a novelty contrary to the general flow of nature. When the moon men begin to dispute the humanity of their visitor, upright posture harms rather than aids his case. Dyrcona’s humanity is in question from the moment he enters their city. Their skepticism revolves around Dyrcona’s bodily form, particularly his bipedalism.

As Maurice Lever notes that the moon is the Earth’s other, bipedalism is just one of many inversions that symbolize the switch from a geocentric to lunocentric viewpoint: “Inversion fondamentale, à partir de laquelle s’élabore un système sélénocentrique qui s’oppose point par point au système géocentrique” (246). As in the case of Dyrcona’s encounter with the Native Americans, his presence, in particular his means of locomotion, represents an oddity that his hosts observe and interpret according to their own criteria of evaluation. For instance, the moon people believe that having been endowed with two legs and two arms like every other creature, they should make use of them in like fashion:

Quand ce peuple me vit passer, me voyant si petit (car la plupart d’entre eux ont douze coudées de longueur), et mon corps soutenu sur deux pieds seulement, ils ne purent croire que je fusse un homme, car ils tenaient, eux autres, que, la Nature ayant donné aux hommes comme aux bêtes deux jambes et deux bras, ils s’en devaient servir comme eux. (76)

As a result, Dyrcona’s upright posture demonstrates a deficiency rather than superiority.

Dyrcona’s difference results in problems of classification for him throughout his journey. Joan DeJean sees a connection between the difficulty of categorizing Dyrcona and the isolation and solitude of the libertine. Dyrcona’s confusion with monkeys and birds is “a burlesque

variant on the images of otherness” (DeJean 130). His otherness in this case manifests in physical difference.

Due to his outward appearance, the moon people initially determine that Dyrcona is an unusual animal and conclude “infailliblement” that he is the female counterpart of a Spaniard in their Queen’s possession (76). The certainty with which the moon people reach a conclusion about a matter of which they can have no sure knowledge betrays their prejudice. Dyrcona’s commentary shows that despite these initial conclusions, some confusion remains as to his true nature: “Ainsi je fus en qualité de telle ou d’autre chose mené droit à l’hôtel de ville où je remarquai, selon le bourdonnement et les postures que faisaient et le peuple et les magistrats, qu’ils consultaient ensemble ce que je pouvais être” (76). Dyrcona’s already recognizes that the moon people communicate amongst themselves, as he interprets their “bourdonnement” and “postures” as language.

Dyrcona does, however, possess language and reasoning abilities, and he converses in Greek with “le démon de Socrate,” who has taken the form of a moon man. The moon people mistake Dyrcona’s Greek for “un grognement non articulé” (82), just as he earlier mistakes the old Native American’s speech for unarticulated noise. Dyrcona’s ability to communicate is invisible to his captors: “car de m’entretenir avec d’autres, outre qu’ils me prenaient pour un animal des mieux enracinés dans la catégorie des brutes, ni je ne savais leur langue, ni eux n’entendaient pas la mienne ; et jugez ainsi quelle proportion” (83). Dyrcona’s observation points squarely to the role prejudice plays in the moon inhabitants’ inability to recognize his ability to use language. Since they take him for “un animal des mieux enracinés dans la catégorie des brutes,” his incapacity for speech is a foregone conclusion. Dyrcona’s summary categorization carries with it the preestablished connection with an inability to speak.

His situation is another example of two species, both capable of reasoning and language, but who are unable to communicate. In the New World, Dyrcona interprets a Native American's speech as a "gazouillement enroué d'un muet," on the moon his own is "un grognement non articulé." Outside of the reversal of roles Dyrcona suffers, the great difference between the relationship between Dyrcona and his moon captors, and Dyrcona and the Native American, is that the he and the Native American share the same bodily form by the appearance of which they can each assume the other to possess language. The moon's inhabitants' inability to recognize Dyrcona's language as speech results from the prejudices they attach to the perfection of their bodily form and language as an ability exclusive to those who share this form.

When Dyrcona appears before the moon's aristocracy they concur with prior opinion as to the nature of their guest and as in the case of prior judgment, there is no equivocality (90). That some doubt remains is again apparent in Dyrcona's commentary which refers to the nobles' judgment as a "préjugé" which the interaction between Dyrcona and the Queen's captive Spaniard they erroneously believe to verify: "Mais, hélas ! ils ne nous eurent pas plus tôt vus parler ensemble qu'ils crurent tous le préjugé véritable" (91). The moon's inhabitants fail to recognize their captives' speech as language and even see it as confirmation of their animality, giving it a Cartesian interpretation by characterizing it as an expression of the passions: "celui de tous les assistants qui opinait pour nous avec plus de faveur protestait que notre entretien était un grognement que la joie d'être rejoints par un instinct naturel nous faisait bourdonner" (91). If communication takes place between the two, it is not the product of deliberative reasoning, nor sign of humanity.

The words Dyrcona and the Spaniard exchange are analogous to the vocalizations of animals, which Descartes defines as reactions and not responses. They therefore fall short of his

standard for language. It is possible to read this passage as a challenge to Descartes's conclusion that animals do not have language, since Dyrcona and the Spaniard do in fact possess language and their later conversations leave no doubt as to their ability to communicate their thoughts. This fact is invisible to the moon people, who see no evidence of human reasoning or language, and therefore have no reason to re-evaluate their prior determination that the Spaniard is a kind of monkey. The interaction of the two upon their encounter assures them that Dyrcona is indeed the female of the same species. Extrapolating from the situation in the novel, one might consider that if such a misinterpretation is possible for the reasonable moon people, it is also possible for humans who judge animals to be without language.

When Dyrcona learns some of the moon people's language (101), misinterpreting his speech as inarticulate sounds is no longer possible, and many of the moon's inhabitants begin to recognize him as a man. Although the Spaniard has not acquired the moon people's language, his definition is also under reconsideration: "Aussitôt les nouvelles coururent par tout le royaume qu'on avait trouvé deux hommes sauvages, plus petit que les autres" (101). That the moon people reconsider the Spaniard's status despite his inability to speak their language demonstrates the continuing prejudice that links bodily form with intellectual capability, as does the tentative definition the moon people assign to their captives. Unable to assimilate the idea of a speaking bipedal creature, they conjecture as to possible explanations for their captives form, ultimately deciding that their bodies are malformed due to diet and deficiencies in their father's seed (101). The moon people preserve their prejudices rather than accept the possibility of reasoning bipedal animals.

Notwithstanding the solid evidence of Dyrcona's speech, his bipedal form continues to incite prejudice regarding his ability to reason. His opposition argues that men walk on all fours

“parce que Dieu ne se voulût pas fier d’une chose si précieuse à une moins ferme assiette” (101), for this reason placing humans on four sturdy pillars to avoid unfortunate accidents, while bipedalism is a sure sign that God has taken no part in the construction of Dyrcona and his ilk, which he abandons “au caprice de la Nature, laquelle, ne craignant pas la perte de si peu de chose, ne les appuya que sur deux pattes” (101). Dyrcona and the Spaniard are not even the equal of birds, who at least have feathers to compensate for their bipedalism: “Les oiseaux mêmes [...] n’ont pas été si maltraités qu’elles, car au moins ils ont reçu des plumes pour subvenir à la faiblesse de leurs pieds, et se jeter en l’air quand nous les éconduirions chez nous ; au lieu que la Nature en ôtant les deux pieds à ces monstres les a mis en état de ne pouvoir échapper à notre justice” (102). According to the moon’s logic, might makes right. The fact that nature does not provide Dyrcona and his companion with means to escape is proof that it is the moon’s inhabitants’ right to deal with their captives as they see fit.

The remainder of the moon people’s reasoned arguments demonstrating the inferiority of upright posture and the superiority of their own four-legged bearing, are a travesty of the anthropocentric position. Dyrcona’s head faces the heavens because he seeks restitution from God for his impoverished state, while the moon men regard the world they inhabit to better contemplate all which is under their domain, having no need of anything above them:

Voyez un peu [...] comme ils ont la tête tournée devers le ciel ! C’est la disette où Dieu les a mis de toutes choses qui les a situés de la sorte, car cette posture suppliante témoigne qu’ils cherchent au ciel pour se plaindre à Celui qui les a créés, et qu’ils Lui demandent permission de s’accomoder de nos restes. Mais nous autres nous avons la tête penchée en bas pour contempler les biens dont nous sommes seigneurs, et comme n’y ayant rien au ciel à qui notre heureuse condition puisse porter envie. (102)

Cyrano demonstrates how beings employ reason to support their own interests. The moon people’s argument is no different from arguments for the superiority of upright posture, and

although it is in direct opposition to it, it is just as reasonable. Ultimately, the moon men conclude that their visitor is certainly not a man, but may be some kind of ostrich, since these birds, too, hold their head upright (104). Upright posture does not confer superiority to Dyrcona in the eyes of the moon's inhabitants, and cannot be used to distinguish humans from other life forms, for the ostrich, just as much as a man, stands upright on two legs.

Although he uses a fictional account to accomplish the task, Cyrano's text challenges human supremacy in much the same way as Montaigne's "Apologie." He provides reasonable arguments in favor of lunar superiority whereas Montaigne argues for animal superiority, but both sets of arguments demonstrate that reason is equally capable of establishing a foundation for both human superiority and inferiority.

That Dyrcona is unable to give sure signs of his intelligence because he has not mastered moon language is evidence that Leonora Cohen Rosenfield is correct in seeing the question of Dyrcona's reasoning on the moon as a satire of Descartes's animal-machine (117). The moon men consider his speech no more than mimicry, much as Descartes excludes the imitation of human words by parakeets and magpies from language in the *Discours de la méthode* (V 122).

When Dyrcona masters the moon's musical language and can finally express his ideas to his hosts, he does his best to impress the moon men with his intelligence and succeeds. The moon's religious figures, however, forbid the moon's inhabitants to believe that he possesses reasoning ability, interpreting his speech as merely the result of instinct:

Quand je fus assez rompu dans l'idiome pour exprimer la plupart de mes conceptions, j'en contai de plus belles. Déjà les compagnies ne s'entretenaient plus que de la gentillesse de mes bons mots, et l'estime qu'on faisait de mon esprit vint jusques là que le clergé fut contraint de publier un arrêt, par lequel on défendait de croire que j'eusse de la raison, avec un commandement tres exprès à toutes personnes de quelque qualité et condition qu'elles fussent, de s'imaginer, quoi que je pusse faire de spirituel, que c'était l'instinct qui me le faisait faire. (102-103)

Cyrano here draws attention to the arbitrary line drawn between human and animal abilities placing instinct on one side and reason on the other. Dyrcona differs from the moon people in bodily form, but his speech does not differ from their own. He is actually using language to communicate his thoughts, and thus even meets Descartes's stringent standard for language and reasoning ability, but the most stalwart defenders of lunar superiority refuse to recognize the evidence before them. The moon people's refusal to acknowledge Dyrcona's humanity given the extent to which he uses language and demonstrates reasoning ability illustrates the firmness of the moon people's belief in their own superiority and the link between bodily form and language and reasoning ability.

Dyrcona receives a trial to determine his nature, but he is unable to demonstrate conclusively that his speech is a product of his reasoning ability and not just an instinctive reaction. This fact illustrates the difficulty of demonstrating reason, especially when the other party harbors prejudices against it. The hearing also reinforces the superiority of the moon people as Dyrcona's responses illustrate the inadequacy of Earthly reasoning confronted by Lunar intelligence. Dyrcona first responds to philosophical questions with what he has learnt in school, but his judges refute his answers, and he finds the reasons "très convaincantes à la vérité" (103), acknowledging the insufficiency of his earthly education. As a last recourse, he spouts Aristotle, and suffers complete defeat.²² "En deux mots," he says, "ils m'en découvrirent la fausseté" (103). The moon men confute the supposed pinnacles of human thought, which are not even enough to convince them of Dyrcona's ability to reason. That he regurgitates his school

²² Dyrcona's position at this point in the story is typical of the libertine hero as Joan DeJean defines it: "At key moments, the libertine hero experiences intellectual failure, the failure of knowledge, the impossibility of total freedom, and always under humiliating circumstances" (194).

lessons like a trained parrot can only add to the moon people's reasons for believing his speech to be the product of instinct.

Ultimately, one of the moon men points out to his fellows that putting their visitor on trial and subjecting him to questioning implies that his persecutors consider him a reasoning being. Dyrcona's defender takes a two-pronged attack. Firstly, he assumes that the defendant is an animal, in which case, his words are merely the result of instinct:

Car supposez qu'il soit animal sans raison, quelle raison vous-mêmes avez-vous de l'accuser d'avoir péché contre elle ? Il a dit que la Lune [the Earth] était un monde ; or les brutes n'agissent que par un instinct de Nature ; donc c'est la Nature qui le dit, et non pas lui. De croire maintenant que cette savante Nature qui a fait et la Lune et ce monde-ci [the Moon] ne sache elle-même ce que c'est, et que vous autres, qui n'avez pas de connaissance que ce que vous en tenez d'elle, le sachiez plus certainement, cela serait bien ridicule. (110-111)

Since Dyrcona's words are instinctive, they are the result of nature. As they come from nature, and nature, he presumes, knows itself better than the moon men who make up the prosecution, one can suppose that the defendant's words are true. Thus, by this reasoning, if his judges pronounce the defendant an animal, they must also acknowledge the veracity of the very claim they wish to denounce, that their moon, in actuality the Earth, is in fact another world.²³

Dyrcona's defender acknowledges that the prosecution might not accept the fact that nature guides animals, which disarms his defense, but he attributes this possible denial to the force of their passions and not to reason, nonetheless supplying another argument that does not rely on the force of nature:

Mais quand même la passion vous faisant renoncer à vos premiers principes, vous supposeriez que la Nature ne guidât point les brutes, rougisiez à tout le moins des

²³ Apart from Dyrcona's humanity, his claim that the Earth, which the moon people hold for a moon, is a another world is also on trial. Joan DeJean reads this passage as a "careful parody...of Galileo's trial and subsequent renunciation of his theory" (89). Dyrcona's punishment consists of an "amende honteuse" (111) that requires him to publicly declare the falsehood of another world.

inquiétudes que vous causent les caprioles d'une bête. En vérité, messieurs, si vous rencontriez un homme d'âge mûr qui veillât à la police d'une fourmilière, pour tantôt donner un soufflet à la fourmi qui aurait fait choir sa compagne, tantôt en emprisonner une qui aurait dérobé à sa voisine un grain de blé, tantôt mettre en justice une autre qui aurait abandonné ses œufs, ne l'estimeriez-vous pas insensé de vaquer à des choses trop au-dessous de lui, et de prétendre assujettir à la raison des animaux qui n'en ont pas l'usage ? Comment donc, vénérables pontifes, appellerez-vous l'intérêt que vous prenez aux caprioles de ce petit animal ? (111)

This second argument hinges on the prosecution's belief in their superiority over animals.

Trying to force a creature without reason to conform to its dictates is below a rational being and even insane. If the prosecution condemns an animal, it must be because it considers it capable of reason, and they thus elevate its status, either that or they are mad.

Dyrcona's defender's reasoning demonstrates the pliability of reason à la Montaigne. Reason is, in fact, so diversely accommodating that it is capable of uncovering reasons for any position, and it need not do so in direct fashion. Dyrcona's defender argues in favor of his humanity by exposing the consequences of considering him an animal. At the same time Dyrcona's trial puts human nature under examination, it also puts the viability of reason as a truth-finding tool in question, a practice present in Montaigne's "Apologie" and La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues*. *L'Autre monde*, therefore, also undertakes the skeptical task of questioning notions of human superiority with the preeminence of reason as their base.

During his trip to the moon, Dyrcona's upright posture, language, and reasoning are unable to demonstrate his humanity, and even less, his superiority. On the moon, bipedalism is shameful, a humiliating punishment reserved for criminals. The moon men make arguments for quadrupedal superiority, every bit as reasonable, and ridiculous, as arguments for bipedal superiority on Earth. Bruno Roche observes Cyrano's recurring technique: the use of burlesque images to render "absurde le préjugé anthropocentrique qui place l'homme au centre de

l'univers" (70). Furthermore, in noting the resemblance between the earthling's upright posture and an ostrich, they destroy bipedalism as a distinctive characteristic of humanity.

Neither is Dyrcona's earthly language able to establish his humanity. It is taken for "un grognement inarticulé" (82) as if merely the sounds of some animal, and when he learns the moon's language, the moon men consider his speech nothing more than mimicry and finally natural instinct. The moon men have a language just as advanced as earthly tongues, capable of articulating philosophical and scientific thought. Expressed musically, moon language may even be superior to language on Earth, for the moon men take up lutes, lyres, and other instruments to express themselves when they wish to rest their voices. Simpler moon men use a sign language to communicate. Though Claudine Nédélec points out that communication by bodily signs in *L'Autre monde* is not "forcément un signe d'animalité" (153), both this sign language and the moon's musical language are both of the sort that could correspond to animal activity in Dyrcona's world—whether the wagging of a dog's tail or the singing of a bird. Cyrano, following in the footsteps of Montaigne and Lucretius among others, is criticizing mankind's presumption that animals have no language of their own simply because they have no language corresponding precisely to human language.

While Dyrcona is ultimately recognized as a man, and hence, presumably a reasoning being, it is despite his earthly knowledge. The moon men easily counter his arguments by means of a philosophy of their own. Half-man, half-beast, the moon men reason at least as well as earthlings, raising the possibility that other creatures, less human in appearance, might reason as well. Cyrano's text degrades mankind; human intellect is found faulty and the human form is the subject of mockery. There is no clear demarcation between humans and animals, and as a result, no human trait can serve as indication of human superiority. Socrates' demon sums up the

general lesson of Dyrcona's stay on the moon. After excluding several exceptional individuals, including several of Cyrano's libertine contemporaries, he states: "Voilà les personnes considérables avec qui j'ai conversé ; tous les autres, au moins de ceux que j'ai connus, sont si fort au-dessous de l'homme, que j'ai vu des bêtes un peu plus haut" (79-80). Humans show no evidence of their superiority over animals through the use of their reason.

Leonora Cohen Rosenfield interprets Dyrcona's trials on the moon as an "allusion to the quarrel over animal automatism" that was in full swing at the time of *L'Autre monde's* composition in the late 1640s (114). She cites Cyrano's study under Gassendi and his friendship with the Cartesian physicist Jacques Rohault as support for this interpretation. Cyrano's connection to Gassendi does increase the likelihood that such an allusion is taking place, and in her introduction to Cyrano's *Fragment de Physique*, Madeleine Alcover confirms that a friendship between Cyrano and Rohault may date from as early as 1641, though the latter's interest in Descartes's philosophy is not known to begin before 1658 (CB ŒC 350). Claudine Nédélec is correct in pointing out that the "conception anti-cartésienne de l'animal" apparent throughout *L'Autre monde* constitutes "une 'preuve' fabuleuse" and therefore the reader cannot be sure if it is "tout à fait sérieux" (155). Nonetheless, we ultimately concur with Rosenfield that not only is an allusion to the debate over Descartes's animal-machine taking place, but that Cyrano is challenging the position that animals are unreasoning machines by raising "the disconcerting question: what must the beasts think of us ?" (Rosenfield 115). By means of this process of role-reversal, Cyrano challenges human supremacy over animals much as Montaigne does in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond." Rosenfield summarizes this interpretation of Dyrcona's adventures on the moon:

Cyrano was following the libertine tradition as well as that of the Renaissance *paradossi* in setting out deliberately to shock people out of the complacency of

their beliefs. It is in this mood that he ridiculed man's calm assurance of his superiority over animals. By imagining the situation in reverse, i.e., with the beasts wondering whether we [humans] converse and reason, or merely follow blind instinct, he left in men's minds the question whether we are too arbitrary in our every-day assumptions. (117)

Although an allusion and challenge to the animal-machine is taking place in the text, it is not necessary to understand Dyrcona's trials on the moon as serving only these functions. They are part of a larger polemic in French literature that challenges human superiority and presumptuousness that predates the Gassendi-Descartes controversy, such as is found in Montaigne's *Essais* and La Mothe Le Vayer's *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens*. In the case of the trial on the moon, Cyrano's rhetorical use of animals falls squarely into the skeptical tradition that preceded the publication of *L'Autre monde*; the reason being that debate over the reasoning and language abilities of animals also predated the publication of Descartes's *Discours*. The *Discours* only accentuated a preexisting debate.

Human Privilege on Trial in the Kingdom of Birds

In Cyrano's second tome of *L'Autre monde, Les Etats et empires du soleil*, Dyrcona voyages to the sun. As during his stay on the moon, Dyrcona experiences persecution at the hands of one of the world's indigenous populations. Just as on the moon, the presumption of humanity is on trial. Rather than the quadruped of the moon, it is the birds who on the sun usurp the privilege of reason, tying it necessarily to the avian bodily form. The birds establish the overall inferiority of humans, assuming a position of avian superiority that rivals human pretensions to supremacy. In this reversal of roles, Moreau sees a lesson from Montaigne: "De l'anthropocentrisme à l'ornithocentrisme, le réflexe est le même : chacun se persuade d'occuper seul le sommet de l'échelle graduée du vivant et n'appréhende l'autre qu'au travers de la

construction idéologique qui lui assure la suprématie” (Moreau, GS 452). The trial in the kingdom of the birds continues Cyrano’s rhetorical use of animals in the skeptical tradition that preceded *L’Autre monde*.

One human privilege that the birds do not revoke is speech. They question only Dyrcona’s ability to reason, but the beginning of the protagonist’s adventure in the kingdom of the birds tackles the question of animal language. The episode leaves no doubt as to the fact that birds speak, not only on the sun, but on Earth, as well.

Dyrcona becomes aware of the language of birds when he meets a phoenix on the surface of the sun. The beauty of the bird stuns him, and so he first fails to recognize its song as speech (231). Gradually, he realizes that “l’oiseau parlait en chantant” and discerns all the markings of language: “je remarquai distinctement les syllabes, les mots et le discours qu’il articula” (231). Dyrcona acknowledges that the bird’s speech is more than mimicry, it is a discourse which the phoenix directs at him. The phoenix explains his desire to speak as the result of instinct, although an instinct it shares with humans. It wishes to tell its story to Dyrcona because it recognizes him as an inhabitant of the Earth, where it has also lived: “Or cette propension secrète dont nous sommes émus pour nos compatriotes, est l’instinct qui me pousse à vouloir que vous sachiez ma vie” (231). Ultimately, the bird’s language is an instinctive behavior, but it is still language. The phoenix communicates its thoughts, and thus demonstrates the use of reason. The implication is that while the use of language may indeed demonstrate the possession of reason, what propels humans to use language in the first place are various instinctive desires. The phoenix illustrates a conception of language that brings reason into accord with instinct, thereby diminishing the importance of reason and augmenting the role of nature. Claudine Nédélec draws out the anti-anthropocentric message of Cyrano’s world where not only birds but

“tout parle”: “Cyrano nous invite à écouter les voix de la Nature, pour sortir de notre anthropocentrisme” (156). The phoenix brings language into the natural realm that both humans and animals share, and wherein animal use of language therefore lacks incongruity. The message is one of human and animal equality, like that of Montaigne’s “Apologie.”

The phoenix anticipates Dyrcona’s wonder, which he attributes to erroneous human assumptions from their experience with tame birds whose mimicry fails to demonstrate reasoning ability:

Je vois votre esprit tendu à comprendre comment il est possible que je m’explique à vous d’un discours suivi, vu qu’encore que les oiseaux contrefassent votre parole, ils ne la conçoivent pas ; mais aussi quand vous contrefaites l’aboi d’un chien ou le chant d’un rossignol, vous ne concevez pas non plus ce que le chien ou le rossignol ont voulu dire. Tirez donc conséquence de là que ni les oiseaux ni les hommes ne sont pas pour cela moins raisonnables. (231-32)

Cyrano here employs a technique seen in Montaigne’s “Apologie de Raimond Sebond,” pointing out that in a reversal of roles, humans themselves would fail to meet the standards they set for animal reasoning. Humans place the onus on animals to demonstrate their ability to communicate. Furthermore, the phoenix exposes the fact that although some birds only mimic human language, this is no proof that they do not reason. The situation of the Spaniard on the moon supports the bird’s conclusion. The reader is aware that the Spaniard reasons and can use language; he converses at some length with Socrates’ demon and Dyrcona on philosophical subjects. Nonetheless, he never learns moon language, and is apparently even unable to mimic it, falling short of the ability of many birds on Earth.

As the case of the Dyrcona and his Spaniard companion illustrates, language abilities differ even among members of the same species. Although most humans cannot understand the language of animals, the phoenix provides a list of those who in the past could. Montaigne provides a similar list in the “Apologie” (453), but the only name that overlaps the two is

Apollonius of Tyana. The phoenix uses the list to depict the parallel between the language abilities of birds and humans:

Cependant de mêmes qu'entre vous autres, il s'en est trouvé de si éclairés, qu'ils ont entendu et parlé notre langue comme Apollonius Tianeus, Anaximander, Ésope, et plusieurs dont je vous tais les noms, pour ce qu'ils ne sont jamais venus à votre connaissance ; de même parmi nous il s'en trouve qui entendent et parlent la vôtre. Quelques'uns, à la vérité, ne savent que celles d'une nation. Mais tout ainsi qu'il se rencontre des oiseaux qui ne disent mot, quelques-un qui gazouillent, d'autres qui parlent, ils s'en rencontre encore de plus parfaits qui savent user de toutes sortes d'idiomes ; quant à moi, j'ai l'honneur d'être de ce petit nombre. (232)

Birds show a broad range of language abilities that may even surpass humans' in their extremes. He does not deny that some birds do not speak at all, but the phoenix is at the other end of the spectrum. It demonstrates its general superiority by having more knowledge of humans, in a limited domain, than Dyrcona himself. His extensive knowledge of human languages exceeds the abilities of most humans, exhibiting the ability to learn the language of another species, something the Spaniard is unable to do on the moon. The bird's presentation gives Montaigne's observation that "il y a plus de distance de tel homme à tel homme qu'il n'y a de tel homme à telle beste" new life (258). The intelligence that both the phoenix and Dyrcona share proves that there may also be more distance between one bird and another than between a given bird and a certain human being.

While relating his life story, the phoenix again ties the phenomenon of language to instinctive desires. The phoenix postulates that extreme desire enables invention and evolution even to the extent of power over matter. Just as birds seek the sun by instinct, and their desire to do so may in fact produce their ability to fly, the desire to communicate may be the ultimate source of language:

Nature a imprimé aux oiseaux une secrète envie de voler jusqu'ici, et peut-être que cette émotion de notre volonté est ce qui nous a fait croître des ailes, comme

les femmes grosses produisent sur leurs enfants la figure des choses qu'elles ont désirées ; ou plutôt comme ceux qui passionnant de savoir nager ont été vus tous endormis se plonger au courant des fleuves, et franchir avec plus d'adresse qu'un expérimenté nager, des hasards qu'étant éveillés ils n'eussent osé seulement regarder ; ou comme ce fils du roi Crésus, à qui un véhément désir de parler pour garantir son père, enseigna tout d'un coup une langue... (232)

The phoenix' hypothesis again downgrades the role of reason, while elevating the importance of the passions and the imagination. Furthermore, the posited evolutionary ability is common to both humans and birds, underscoring the affinity of the two.

The hypothesis also brings the concept of essences specific to individual species into question. Is a bird before birds have wings still a bird? If the phoenix's speculation is correct, then species do not have a fixed nature, they evolve and change; therefore any characteristics that define them as species are also subject to change, and dividing lines between species, between humans and animals, are provisional at best. Bérengère Parmentier discusses this facet of Cyrano's text, concluding that "Le rejet de l'opposition entre l'homme et l'animal tend d'abord, dans la tradition libertine, à remettre en cause le dogme chrétien de l'immortalité spécifique de l'âme humaine. Mais, dans le cas particulier de Cyrano il faut sans doute aller plus loin, et y lire la projection provocatrice d'une absolue non-fixité des espèces" (126-27). At some point a human may no longer be human and an animal no longer an animal; they might even switch roles.

The differences among birds of which the phoenix speaks are manifest when Dyrcona stumbles onto a kingdom of birds. The birds he encounters lack the perfection of the phoenix and, unlike the phoenix, any instinct to communicate with him. Dycona's new adventure on the sun parallels the tribulations he experiences on the moon. Immediately upon his arrival in their

dominion, the birds demonstrate their superiority by restraining and caging him.²⁴ More than their great number, their audaciousness surprises Dyrcona:

Ce qui me surprit davantage fut que ces oiseaux au lieu d'effaroucher à ma rencontre, voltigeaient à l'entour de moi ; l'un sifflait à mes oreilles, l'autre faisait la roue sur ma tête ; bref, après que leurs petites gambades eurent occupé mon attention fort longtemps, tout à coup je sentis mes bras chargés de plus d'un million de toutes sortes d'espèces, qui pesaient dessus si lourdement, que je ne les pouvais remuer. (233-34)

Dyrcona is no longer on Earth, where humans have dominion over animals; he is on the sun, in the kingdom of the birds, where he becomes the victim of attitudes of avian supremacy.

The question of Dyrcona's reasoning ability again comes into play when his bird captors grow anxious to devour him. A magpie ally argues on the basis of Dyrcona's reasoning ability that it would be barbaric to eat him. Echoing the arguments against Dyrcona's reasoning ability on the moon, the bird mob refuses to accept the possibility of reasoning ability in a creature whose bodily form differs from their own, and which they consider to be inherently inferior:

...ma pie s'étant émancipée de représenter que c'était un procédé barbare, de faire ainsi mourir sans connaissance de cause un animal qui approchait en quelque sorte de leur raisonnement, ils la pensèrent mettre en pièces, alléguant que cela serait bien ridicule de croire qu'un animal tout nu, que la Nature même en mettant au jour ne s'était pas souciée de fournir des choses nécessaires à le conserver, fût comme eux capable de raison... (234-35)

Among the more common members of the bird society, the marriage of the human form with reason is shocking. They show the same prejudices humans display regarding the privileges of

²⁴ Although this chapter focusses on the anti-anthropocentric message of Dyrcona's adventure in the kingdom of the birds, in addition to exploring that aspect of the passage, Madeleine Alcover also discerns its function as a political satire:

L'intention satirique de l'auteur est évidente : l'homme qui se croit si supérieur, reçoit une leçon de civisme d'êtres inférieurs et qu'il considère comme dépourvus de raison. Les fondements de la vie politique des oiseaux sont la contre-partie de ceux des régimes du XVII^e siècle : la justice s'oppose à la force ; la liberté, à l'arbitraire ; l'égalité, aux trois ordres. (123-24)

their own bodily form: “pour la commune, elle criait que cela était horrible, de croire qu’une bête qui n’avait pas le visage fait comme eux, eût de la raison. ‘Hé ! quoi,’ murmuraient-ils l’un à l’autre, ‘il n’a ni bec, ni plumes, ni griffes, et son âme serait spirituelle ! Ô dieux ! quelle impertinence !’” (235). The common bird offers no reasons for their belief in reason as a privilege of the avian body, which stems from their sense of superiority. The outrage at Dyrcona’s impertinence demonstrates that it is again human presumptions of superiority that are on trial.

The “plus sages” (235), on the other hand, admit to certain resemblances between birds and humans, but find them monstrously distorted. They offer evidence of avian superiority in terms of the senses, birds’ senses being more acute, and human inferiority in terms of their vanity and presumption which manifest in the prerogative they exercise over the animal kingdom:

Encore...si c’étaient un animal qui approchât un peu davantage de notre figure, mais justement le plus dissemblable, et le plus affreux ; enfin une bête chauve, un oiseau plumé, une chimère amassée de toutes sortes de natures, et qui fait peur à toutes : l’homme [...] si sot et si vain, qu’il se persuade que nous n’avons été faits que pour lui ; l’homme qui avec son âme si clairvoyante, ne saurait distinguer le sucre d’avec l’arsenic, et qui avalera de la ciguë que son beau jugement lui aurait fait prendre pour du persil ; l’homme qui soutient qu’on ne raisonne que par le rapport des sens, et qui cependant a les sens les plus faibles, les plus tardifs et les plus faux d’entre toutes les créatures ; l’homme enfin que la Nature, pour faire de tout, a créé comme les monstres, mais en qui pourtant elle a infus l’ambition de commander à tous les animaux, de les exterminer. (235)

Humans are monstrous because they are a “chimère amassée de toutes sortes de natures,” but also because they paradoxically combine “les sens les plus faibles” with “l’ambition de commander à tous les animaux.”

Humans are an abomination of nature and a detriment to the well-being of animals, and so Dyrcona is brought to trial. The trial is another illustration of avian authority, the prerogative of birds on the sun. Dyrcona stands trial for the crimes of his race — it is not just human

superiority that is in question but humanity itself. The prejudices apparent during Dyrcona's trial on the moon recur on the sun. As the prosecutor opens his case, he betrays his prejudices against humanity by the oath he takes when he announces that he seeks the death penalty:

Il ne nous serait pas malaisé d'empêcher par sa mort les violences qu'il peut faire ; toutefois comme le salut ou la perte de tout ce qui vit importe à la République des vivants, il me semble que nous mériterions d'être nés hommes, c'est-à-dire dégradés de la raison et de l'immortalité que nous avons par-dessus eux, si nous leur avons ressemblé par quelqu'une de leurs injustices. (243-44)

The worst fate imaginable for a bird is to be human, on the basis of the avian privileges of reason and the immortal soul.

Prejudices that derive from the body continue to play a part in Dyrcona's persecution, as his prosecutor uses Dyrcona's appearance in a list of proofs to convince the assembly of his humanity. Unlike birds, Dyrcona "a toujours une quantité de petits grès carrés dans la bouche qu'il n'a pas l'esprit de cracher ni d'avaler" (244). Also on the list are other traits that have historically been used to distinguish humans from animals, such as laughter and crying (244). In this case the frontier between human and animal they represent serves to confirm human inferiority rather than superiority, for Dyrcona "rit comme un fol" and "pleure comme un sot" (244). The point is that even where limits exist, hierarchy is unclear. Moreau draws a similar lesson from the protagonists' trials: "il n'y a pas de frontières étanches entre les espèces, ce qui explique qu'on puisse tomber ou monter d'espèce, selon son environnement, son éducation ou sa complexion d'origine" (GS 747). Determining which side of a limit is superior is an arbitrary process, subject to bias.

The prosecution chooses Dyrcona's display of religion as his concluding evidence for his humanity, in a description that doubles as a satire of prayer:

...il lève en haut tous les matins ses yeux, son nez et son large bec, colle ses mains ouvertes la pointe au ciel plat contre plat, et n'en fait qu'une attachée,

comme s'il s'ennuyait d'en avoir deux livres, se casse les jambes par la moitié, en sorte qu'il tombe sur ses gigots, puis avec des paroles magiques qu'il bourdonne, j'ai pris garde que ses jambes rompues se rattachent, et qu'il se relève après aussi gai qu'auparavant. (244)

Like laughter and crying, religion is one of the traditional exclusively human behaviors that acts here as a sign of Dyrcona's humanity, and hence, inferiority, but the prosecutor's portrayal of prayer also reveals the problems of interspecies understanding. The bird understands Dyrcona's behavior in animal terms. The human lifts his "bec" to the sky, falls on his "gigots" and "bourdonne" his prayer. Each species is to some degree inscrutable to all others and is subject to species-centric thinking. On a larger scale, the universe itself is of a complexity that Cyrano's protagonists can scarcely fathom. René Démoris notes that this incomprehensibility denotes an inhuman, or one might say non-anthropocentric, universe: "le narrateur prend conscience de l'infinie complexité du monde et de son caractère fondamentalement inhumain, qui fait que ce monde excède sa capacité de comprendre" (52). This is true for both the birds and Dyrcona; each is limited to understanding the universe from their species-centric viewpoint.

Since the prosecutor perceives Dyrcona's behavior from an ornithocentric viewpoint, he interprets his religion as magic. This leads him to conclude that Dyrcona must be a man, since magic is one of the defining characteristics of humanity: "Or vous savez, messieurs, que de tous les animaux il n'y a que l'homme seul dont l'âme soit assez noire pour s'adonner à la magie, et par conséquent celui-ci est homme" (244). A trait that birds arbitrarily assume to define humans, they also arbitrarily assume to be evil, and it condemns rather than vindicates the defendant.

The prosecution considers its evidence for the humanity of the defendant incontrovertible, and passes to reasoning in support of the death penalty based upon the monstrosity of humanity. Humans disturb the harmony of nature: "Je pense, messieurs, qu'on n'a jamais révoqué en doute que toutes les créatures sont produites par notre commune mère

pour vivre en société. Or si je prouve que l'homme semble n'être né que pour la rompre, ne prouverai-je pas qu'allant contre la fin de sa création, il mérite que la Nature se repente de son ouvrage ?" (244-45). Humans are a work of nature that operate contrary to its general design. As Serroy points out, bringing this fact to light is an important function of the trials on the moon and the sun and reveals the frailties of the anthropocentric position: "Le vieil univers anthropocentrique s'écroule, dès que, débarquant sur la Lune et sur le Soleil, l'homme se voit accus[é] de pervertir la loi universelle" (RR 431). When humans distinguish themselves from other species, they distinguish themselves from the rest of nature, demonstrating their defectiveness rather than their superiority.

Despite the ornithocentrism apparent throughout Dyrcona's stay in the kingdom of the birds, the bulk of the remainder of the prosecutor's argument rests on the anthropocentrism of human beings. Human beings exert their power over other species without cause and to the detriment of nature as a whole. They disrupt the equality that would otherwise exist between species. The prosecutor likens human existence among nature's other creations to a fractious element within a republic:

La première et la plus fondamentale loi pour la manutention d'une république, c'est l'égalité ; mais l'homme ne la saurait endurer éternellement : il se rue sur nous pour nous manger ; il se fait accroire que nous n'avons été faits que pour lui ; il prend, pour argument de sa supériorité prétendue, la barbarie avec laquelle il nous massacre, et le peu de résistance qu'il trouve à forcer notre faiblesse... (245)

The human maxim that might makes right and validates human superiority violates the principle of equality that is at the core of nature's design. Furthermore, the argument is invalid since it fails to account for hierarchy among nature's creatures. Humans may be more powerful than some birds, but they are weaker than others. Humanity "ne veut pas cependant avouer pour ses

maîtres, les aigles, les condurs, et les griffons, par qui les plus robustes d'entre eux sont surmontés" (245).

As in the case of language, the physical force of birds exists on a scale that reaches beyond human limits on both end of the spectrum. Some birds are more frail than the frailest of humans, but others surpass even the mightiest members of humanity. Humans fail to take into account the differences that exists among animals when they determine their supremacy. If they did, they would have to acknowledge the superiority of certain bird species.

Dyrcona's prosecutor dismantles the argument on another level when he asserts that birds constitute a single species, thereby insuring the superiority of birds as a whole: "Mais pourquoi cette grandeur et disposition de membres marquerait-elle diversité d'espèce, puisque entre eux-mêmes il se rencontre des nains et des géants ?" (245). On the surface, the prosecutor is arguing that humans cannot selectively claim to be superior to individual bird species, although they are inferior to others, but his definition of species blurs the lines that exist between them in a way that calls the demarcation between humans and animals into question. There is just as much difference in the size and form of the body between individual humans as there are between species of birds, and so reason to assume that all birds are of the same nature. Yet there is a similar difference in size and disposition of the body between humans and animal, as the prosecutor's use of "bec" and "gigot" to refer to Dyrcona's body earlier affirms. In the prosecutor's accusation is the seed of an argument for the commonality of human and animal nature that the birds overlook.

Human social structure is also under fire. The bird claims that their propensity to seek servitude and abhor freedom is at odds with the authority they exert over animals:

Encore est-ce un droit imaginaire que cet empire dont ils se flattent ; ils sont au contraire si enclins à la servitude, que de peur de manquer à servir ils se vendent

les uns aux autres leur liberté. C'est ainsi que les jeunes sont esclaves des vieux, les pauvres des riches, les paysans des gentilshommes, les princes des monarques, et les monarques mêmes des lois qu'ils ont établies. (245)

Although the prosecutor does not make the connection, the social order he describes also conflicts with the equality that is nature's intent. The fact that the lowest in the human social hierarchy invent gods of all kinds and harbor "fausses espérances" of immortality proves that they are fearful of a lack of ruling bodies in life and even after death (245-46). For the prosecutor the human need for servitude is incompatible with the command they exercise over animals, and it remarks ironically: "Voilà le bel effet de cette fantastique monarchie et de cet empire si naturel de l'homme sur les animaux et sur nous-mêmes, car son insolence a été jusqu'à" (246). An attitude of avian superiority is still present in the bird's harangue on equality, as it separates birds from other animals and implies that assuming a position of superiority over birds is an especially impudent act.

To conclusively demonstrate the monstrosity of humanity, the prosecutor details the tyrannical human practices that afflict birds:

Cependant en conséquence de cette principauté ridicule, il s'attribue tout joliment sur nous le droit de vie et de mort ; il nous dresse des embuscades, il nous enchaîne, il nous jette en prison, il nous égorge, il nous mange, et, de la puissance de tuer ceux qui sont demeurés libres, il fait un prix à la noblesse. Il pense que le Soleil s'est allumé pour l'éclairer à nous faire la guerre ; que Nature nous a permis d'étendre nos promenades dans le ciel, afin seulement que de notre vol il puisse tirer de malheureux ou favorables auspices ; et quand Dieu mit des entrailles dedans notre corps, qu'il n'eut intention que de faire un grand livre où l'homme pût apprendre la science des choses futures. (246)

What the prosecutor attacks more than the viciousness of human authority is the presumption of an anthropocentric view of the world. Humans, by placing themselves at the center of the universe and imagining the rest of creation only as subjects for their own desires and needs, display "un orgueil tout à fait insupportable" (246).

The reader might expect the prosecution to argue that human presumption and its resulting tyranny are adequate reason for the death penalty sought, since human attitudes and behaviors are at variance with nature's norms. Cyrano's trial on the sun is, as Serroy points out, about the monstrosity of humanity. What is more, Serroy remarks the important link between monstrosity and anthropocentrism: "Tout ce qui échappe à la Nature est monstrueux : l'anthropomorphisme, en ce qu'il s'oppose le plus radicalement au matérialisme universel, est bien, pour Cyrano, la monstruosité suprême" (RR 431). The prosecutor begins his case by denouncing this monstrosity, but then shifts his stance, and excuses the anthropocentric behavior he has just outlined in the name of human ignorance: "Ce n'est pas toutefois sur quoi je vous presse de condamner celui-ci. La pauvre bête n'ayant pas comme nous l'usage de la raison, j'excuse ses erreurs quant à celles que produit son défaut d'entendement" (246). The fault for humankind's presumption lies in their ignorance of their actual position. Unable to reason, humans cannot see the evidence of their own inferiority, and are unable to discern the order of nature that they contradict. This argumentation is another attack on the validity and effectiveness of human reason à la Montaigne.

The prosecuting bird still demands the death penalty, but he predicates his claim on the maliciousness of human will:

...pour celles [errors] qui ne sont filles que de la volonté, j'en demande justice : par exemple, de ce qu'il nous tue, sans être attaqué par nous ; de ce qu'il nous mange, pouvant repaître sa faim de nourriture plus convenable, et ce que j'estime beaucoup plus lâche, de ce qu'il débauche le bon naturel de quelques-uns des nôtres, comme des laniers, des faucons et des vautours, pour les instruire au massacre des leurs, à faire gorge chaude de leur semblable, ou nous livrer entre ses mains. (246)

The prosecutor construes a creature without reason, but it accords will to humans despite their lack of reasoning ability. The behaviors it attributes to the will are those that appear to lie

outside of instinctive reactions to survive. Humans attack without provocation, eat animals despite the existence of more suitable food, and go to the trouble of training other animals—thereby corrupting their “bon naturel”—to procure the animal flesh they consume. None of these activities are necessary for human survival, and none result from stimuli that might indicate an instinctive reaction as their source. The prosecutor, presumably, therefore concludes that these behaviors stem from the human will.

Dyrcona’s lawyer underlines the extreme monstrosity of humanity when he has his turn to speak. Humans are to be pitied, but the continued existence of a being so contrary to nature is indefensible:

Il est vrai, messieurs, qu’ému de pitié j’avais enterpris la cause pour cette malheureuse bête ; mais sur le point de la plaider, il m’est venu un remords de conscience, et comme une voix secrète qui m’a défendu d’accomplir une action si détestable. Ainsi, messieurs, je vous déclare, et à toute la Cour, que pour faire le salut de mon âme, je ne veux contribuer en façon quelconque à la durée d’un monstre tel que l’homme. (247)

An assembly of birds applauds Dyrcona’s defense earlier, despite its shortcomings, but the court audience now approves the starling’s decision not to perform his duty: “Toute la populace claqua du bec en signe de réjouissance, et pour congratuler à la sincérité d’un si oiseau de bien” (247).

When Dyrcona’s magpie ally offers to step in for the starling, the court imposes his silence, since they do not allow someone with a prejudice in favor of the defendant to plead on his behalf, and the court suspects the magpie of being corrupted by his captivity among humans (247). The court’s decision preserves an ornithocentric viewpoint; taking a human viewpoint is not permissible. The position is ironic since it is anthropocentrism that is on trial, but the birds’ own pretensions of supremacy remain unquestioned.

This fact confirms Moreau's conclusion that the ornithocentrism on display points to a "trait commun à l'ensemble du vivant : la conscience parfaitement illusoire que nous avons de la prééminence de l'espèce à laquelle nous appartenons" (730). Both birds and humans suffer from the delusion of their own superiority. The irony results from Cyrano's attribution of human characteristics he wishes to attack to birds as a satirical method. Alcover explains: "*L'Histoire des Oiseaux* ne se présente pas sans une certaine ironie qui consiste à prêter à la gente plumée les mêmes prétentions et les mêmes préjugés vis-à-vis des hommes que ceux-ci manifestent à l'égard de celle-là" (120). The point of Cyrano's satire is to point out the ridiculousness of human pretensions.

The irony of the birds' condemnation of humanity continues when they sentence Dyrcona to death. Undoubtedly thinking of the birds' denunciation of humanity's attacks on birds earlier in the text, Prévot notes that the birds respond "au génocide par le génocide" (CBR 96). The birds decide in favor of a death penalty that serves to teach Dyrcona of the true place of humanity in the universe: "ils trouvèrent à propos pour faire sympathiser mon châtiment à quelqu'un de mes crimes, et m'anéantir par un supplice qui servît à me détromper, en bravant ce prétendu empire de l'homme sur les oiseaux, que je fusse abandonné à la colère des plus faibles d'entre eux ; cela veut dire qu'ils me condamnèrent à être mangé des mouches" (248).²⁵

In addition to its stated end of demonstrating human inferiority to Dyrcona, the punishment also validates bird supremacy. The birds enforce their will on Dyrcona just as they claim humans do to animals. They, too, are guilty in this case of attacking without having been attacked, and usurping the power of life or death over another species. In executing their human

²⁵ It may be that the birds consider the insects in question brethren because they have wings and are capable of flight, but Prévot notes the same amalgamation appears in one of Cyrano's probable inspirations, Lucian's *True Story* (CBR 11).

captive, the birds display the same might makes right attitude for which they condemn humanity. The entire trial is a demonstration of the error of humankind's judgment of its relation to the rest of creation, as Jacques Prévot so clearly points out: "La justice des Oiseaux est bien le pendant de la justice intolérante, partielle, égocentrique et sanguinaire des hommes" (CBR 96).

Two birds of paradise accompany Dyrcona to the site of his execution, offering consolation and reminders of the particular lack of importance of human life, and the superiority of birds (249-50). After referencing the finitude of Dyrcona's life, the birds of paradise explain, "Je parle à toi ainsi, à cause que ton âme n'étant pas immortelle comme la nôtre, tu peux bien juger,"²⁶ quand tu meurs, que tout meurt avec toi" (249). Nonetheless, another form of immortality is available to Dyrcona. His matter will live on in other forms, and the birds hypothesize that it may even someday find the form it has now so that he will experience life once again, even if distinct from his current experiences: "Oui ; mais, me diras-tu, je ne me souviendrai pas d'avoir été ? Hé! mon cher frère, que t'importe, pourvu que tu te sentes être ?" (250). Prévot notes that one of the birds of paradise reduces Dyrcona and "ce qu'il appelle 'les brutes' à leur matérialité, l'animal ainsi définissant l'animal comme machine, à la manière de Descartes" (CBR 38). The irony of this position highlights the presumptuousness of assuming a fundamental difference between one's own species and others.

The evolution of which the birds speak even allows for advancement along the hierarchy of matter: "Je veux donc que tu ne deviennes qu'une motte de terre, ou un caillou, encore seras-tu quelque chose de moins méchant que l'homme" (250). This conversation again points to an ever-changing natural order where there are no clear borders between existents and no absolute hierarchy among them.

²⁶ The bird of paradise seems to forget that he is speaking to a creature without reason.

The changes that accompany matter even allow for the ascension of a non-reasoning being, such as the birds consider Dyrcona to be, to participation of a sort in reasoning activity:

Mais j'ai un secret à te découvrir, que je ne voudrais pas qu'aucun de mes compagnons eût entendu de ma bouche : c'est qu'étant mangé, comme tu vas être, de nos petits oiseaux, tu passeras en leur substance. Oui, tu auras l'honneur de contribuer, quoique aveuglément, aux opérations intellectuelles de nos mouches, et de participer à la gloire, si tu ne raisones toi-même, de les faire au moins raisonner. (250)

The knowledge the birds impart borders on blasphemy because it undermines bird superiority by acknowledging the equality of bird and human flesh, and assigning a role to human flesh in the superior nature of birds.

Dyrcona never knows the glory of contributing to insect reason because he receives a pardon based on testimony to the effect that he supports animal reasoning. A parakeet, César, belonged to Dyrcona's cousin, and as it reminds him, in the bird's favor Dyrcona had "tant de fois soutenu que les oiseaux raisonnent" (253). A symbolical representation of this act occurred when Dyrcona released the parakeet from his cage: "Donc [...] est-ce toi, mon pauvre César, à qui j'ouvris la cage pour te rendre la liberté que la tyrannique coutume de notre monde t'avait ôtée ?" (253).

Sympathy for a captive magpie on Earth is not enough to save Dyrcona from a death sentence, but the liberation of the parakeet prompts the bird king to release him:

Homme, parmi nous une bonne action n'est jamais perdue ; c'est pourquoi, encore qu'étant homme tu mérites de mourir seulement à cause que tu es né, le Sénat te donne la vie. Il peut bien accompagner de cette reconnaissance les lumières dont Nature éclaira ton instinct, quand elle te fit pressentir en nous la raison que tu n'étais pas capable de connaître. Va donc en paix, et vis joyeux ! (253)

The act of freeing the parakeet from its cage differentiates Dyrcona's kindness from that he shows the magpie during its imprisonment among humans, but the belief he offers in support of bird reasoning ability in the parakeet's presence is an even greater difference. In the presence of

the magpie he wonders if the bird might not have uttered apropos words “par prophétie” (243), but even if he had argued for bird language ability this is not the same as arguing for bird reasoning. The birds never claim language ability as an avian privilege and never challenge Dyrcona’s ability to speak. Their willingness to converse with Dyrcona and especially their own use of human language evidence their acceptance of human language ability. Reason is, however, the dominion of birds. If Dyrcona was able to understand that birds reason, it is not because he himself reasons, but rather because of some extraordinary gift of nature. Dyrcona owes his freedom in large part because of the birds’ perception that in arguing for avian reasoning ability he admits, albeit unwittingly, the birds’ superior position and affirms their ornithocentric worldview.

As noted above, Dyrcona’s trial in the kingdom of the birds is a satirical passage that critiques human pretensions to superiority. Cyrano fulfills the skeptical purpose of humbling humanity by using comparisons between humans and animals—birds in this case—to destabilize arguments for human superiority. The ornithocentrism on the sun is a burlesque of anthropocentric attitudes much as La Mothe Le Vayer’s arguments for donkey superiority are a burlesque of arguments for human supremacy. Neither the excellence of avian nature nor the monstrosity of humanity is the real point of Dyrcona’s trial; Cyrano’s goal is to discredit anthropocentric notions.

The Lunar Youth and Questions About the Nature of the Soul

Although Cyrano’s *L’Autre monde* uses animals predominantly as a means of challenging anthropocentrism, it differs from an earlier text such as La Mothe Le Vayer’s *Dialogues* which does the same because of the link that exists between animals and questions concerning the

nature of the soul. Whereas La Mothe Le Vayer's interlocutors discuss the immortality or immateriality of the soul without referencing animals in a significant way, when the topic comes up in *Les Etats et empires de la lune*, Cyrano immediately invokes animals.

This is part of a shift that results from Descartes's conception of the animal which Isabelle Moreau signals:

Dans le contexte des controverses suscitées par les théories cartésiennes, la question de l'accession éventuelle de l'animal à la raison et au langage articulé se transforme. Elle était jusque-là évoquée, dans la continuité de Montaigne et de Charron, pour ôter à l'homme un peu de sa superbe ; elle en vient à bousculer les critères de la spécificité ontologique de l'homme. La radicalité des thèses de Descartes provoque, en effet, une cristallisation du débat sur la nature de l'âme humaine en termes de matérialité/spiritualité de la pensée [...] cette dimension polémique est déjà présente dans les romans cyraniens. (452)

The rhetorical use of animals present in the conversation between Dyrcona and an impious moon youth on the nature of the soul exemplifies the presence of this shift in *L'Autre monde*, thereby lending credence to her observation.

A reference to animality appears before the discussion on the nature of the soul even begins, as Dyrcona endeavors to correct the youth's irreligion: "je l'exhortai mille fois de ne pas embourber de matière ce beau génie dont le Ciel l'avait pourvu, qu'il tirât de la presse des animaux cet esprit capable de la vision de Dieu ; enfin qu'il avisât sérieusement à voir unir quelque jour son immortalité au plaisir plutôt qu'à la peine" (148). Although the nature of the soul is not yet under discussion, Dyrcona's plea anticipates the key points of the debate. Dyrcona places the mind, "ce beau génie," of the youth in contrast to "matière" which soils its purity. Like Descartes's thinking substance, the soul Dyrcona envisions is capable of "la vision de Dieu," and is immaterial, allowing for a clear distinction between human and animal nature. The youth, whose conception of the soul is material and mortal along the lines of a Lucretian

model, denies this distinction and is thus a member of the animal throng, like Montaigne's human, an animal among animals.

The youth confirms Dyrcona's opinion of him, and begins his arguments against the immortality of the soul by protesting against the presumptuous belief that humans possess an immortal soul while animals do not: "Quoi ! me répliqua-t-il en s'éclatant de rire, vous estimez votre âme immortelle privativement à celle des bêtes ? Sans mentir, mon grand ami, votre orgueil est bien insolent !" (148). The discussion of the nature of the soul begins with animals while still circumscribing the debate in the larger issue of anthropocentrism. Like his predecessors, Cyrano attacks human presumptuousness. As Montaigne does in his "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," the youth calls for evidence of human superiority and supposes the conventional response that human superiority lies in the ability to reason: "Et d'où argumentez-vous, je vous prie, cette immortalité au préjudice de celle des bêtes ! Serait-ce à cause que nous sommes doués de raisonnement et non pas elles ?" (148). The youth's challenge also presupposes the link between reasoning ability and the possession of an immortal soul. His challenge is indication that he wishes to contest conventional arguments for human superiority as well as arguments for an immortal soul exclusive to humanity that rely on human reasoning ability.

Predictably, the youth denies that animals are incapable of reasoning and even offers to demonstrate whenever Dyrcona desires that "elles raisonnent comme nous" (148). Alcover believes that the youth's position on the reasoning ability of animals is Cyrano's own, supporting her position with the testimony of Cyrano's friend Henri Lebreton: "Cyrano croyait, a dit Lebreton, que les bêtes raisonnaient. Ce fait est certain et sur ce point Savinien a exactement la même opinion que le Jeune Homme" (169). Lebreton's testimony, however reliable, cannot establish the

equivalence of Cyrano's beliefs on animal reasoning and the moon youth's position. The youth's exact position is not even clear, as there is some ambiguity in his claim that they reason "comme nous." For the purposes of this dissertation, Cyrano's stance on animal reasoning is not at issue; the importance of the passage is the use of animals as a rhetorical device in discussion of the nature of the human soul.

In addition to questioning the exclusivity of human reason to disarm Dyrcona's arguments, the moon youth also admits its exclusivity to deny a link between one privilege and another. He shows that there is no necessary connection between a reasoning soul exclusive to humanity and an immortal soul exclusive to humanity: "Mais encore qu'il fût vrai que la raison nous eût été distribuée en apanage et qu'elle fût un privilège réservé seulement à notre espèce, est-ce à dire pour cela qu'il faille que Dieu enrichisse l'homme de l'immortalité, parce qu'il lui a déjà prodigué la raison ?" (148). The youth finds it more likely that one privilege makes another less likely and uses a specious but logical analogy to make his point: "Je dois donc, à ce compte-là, donner aujourd'hui à ce pauvre une pistole parce que je lui donnai hier un écu ? Vous voyez bien vous-même la fausseté de cette conséquence, et qu'au contraire, si je suis juste, plutôt que de donner une pistole à celui-ci, je dois donner un écu à l'autre, puisqu'il n'a rien touché de moi" (148-49). The passage is reminiscent of Montaigne's stated belief in the "Apologie" that God has endowed all creatures with what is necessary to their survival, and that in this respect all are equal. The youth's argument implies a belief in the relative equality of humans and animals along the same lines. While God may endow humans or animals with unique abilities, their overall gifts are commensurate.

When Dyrcona seeks out his teacher to clarify the issue, the démon de Socrates admits the charm of the youth's reasonings, which "brillent un peu de loin" (149). The demon refuses

to accept the argument, however, but instead subjects the position of the youth to the same criticism of presumptuousness that the youth levels against Dyrcona and ultimately chooses to leave the resolution of such matters to the authority of the Church:

Et quoi que je pusse lui demander comme il sait que ce qui est juste à nous soit aussi juste à Dieu, comme il sait que Dieu se mesure à notre aune, comme il sait que nos lois et nos coutumes, qui n'ont été instituées que pour remédier à nos désordres, servent aussi pour tailler les morceaux de la toute-puissance de Dieu, je passerai toutes ces choses, avec tout ce qu'ont si divinement répondu sur cette matière les Pères de votre Église... (149-50)

In essence, the demon counters the youth's arguments by taking an even more skeptical position than his adversary but with an added emphasis on the acceptance of social convention.²⁷ The demon goes on to describe an evolution of matter which tends towards the perfection that is humanity, "l'achèvement du plus beau mixte, et le mieux imaginé qui soit au monde, étant le seul qui fasse le lien de la vie brutale avec l'angélique" (150). Humans are the only earthly beings who form a link between animals and the divine, and so they constitute the "plus beau mixte" of matter. The demon implies that human superiority is the result of special attention from God, since the "plus beau mixte" is also the "mieux imaginé." The demon's belief contradicts his previous skeptical position as he falls into an anthropocentric position of his own. In the case of both the youth and the demon, presumptuousness is difficult to shed.

Dyrcona and the youth again arrive at the nature of the soul while debating the validity of medicine, and animals are again at the forefront of the discussion. Dyrcona is ready to grant the youth's claim that the imagination effects all cures provided his adversary concede that this fact establishes the reasonableness of the soul (153). He uses this concession to lead into an argument in favor of an immaterial and immortal soul that recreates in simplified form

²⁷ By invoking social convention, the demon takes a Pyrrhonian stance, as Prévot remarks in his notes to the text (323).

Descartes's position: "Or si, étant séparée de nous, elle [the soul] est raisonnable, il faut nécessairement qu'elle soit spirituelle ; et si vous la confessez spirituelle, je conclus qu'elle est immortelle, puisque la mort n'arrive aux animaux que par le changement des formes dont la matière seule est capable" (153). The similarity with Descartes relies on equating "spirituelle" with immaterial as the text implies, and an examination of Descartes's "Abrégé" that opens the *Méditations métaphysiques*. Descartes notes that the human body is composed of "accidents," while the soul is "une pure substance" (21). As a pure substance the soul cannot change even when its accidents change; Descartes offers conceiving, perceiving, and desiring as examples of these changes (21). The body, on the other hand, "n'est plus le même, de cela seul que la figure de quelques-unes de ses parties se trouve changée" (21). Descartes thereby concludes that "the corps humain peut facilement périr, mais que l'esprit, ou l'âme de l'homme (ce que je ne distingue point), est immortelle de sa nature" (21). This is also Dyrcona's position.

When the youth begins his rebuttal, he begins with animals, demonstrating the important connection between animal nature and the nature of the human soul. The youth attempts to show the incongruity of a belief in both a material, mortal animal soul and an immortal, immaterial human one: "Pour l'âme des bêtes qui est corporelle, je ne m'étonne pas qu'elle meure [...] mais je m'étonne bien fort que la nôtre, incorporelle, intellectuelle et immortelle, soit contrainte de sortir de chez nous pour les mêmes causes qui font périr celle d'un bœuf" (153). The reason for the youth's astonishment is the lack of connection between the state of an immaterial soul and a material body. The youth reasons to comic effect that this separation necessitates the postulation of something like a contract between the soul and the body: "A-t-elle fait pacte avec notre corps que, quand il aurait un coup d'épée dans le cœur, une balle de plomb dans la cervelle, une

mousquetade à travers le corps, d'abandonner aussitôt sa maison trouée ?" (153). The youth's argument emphasizes the role of the body in death, the materiality of its causes.

This argument leads to the supposition of a material soul.

To the preceding argument, the youth adds the contradiction of a soul capable of reasoning without the body and the existence of the deaf and the blind:

Et si cette âme était spirituelle, et par soi-même raisonnable, comme ils disent, qu'elle fût aussi capable d'intelligence quand elle est séparée de notre masse qu'alors qu'elle en est revêtue, pourquoi les aveugles-nés, avec tous les beaux avantages de cette âme intellectuelle ne sauraient-ils même s'imaginer ce que c'est que de voir ? Pourquoi les sourds n'entendent-ils point ? (154)

The youth is aware of explanations for the deaf and blind using the analogy of a painter unable to paint without his brushes (154). He points out the inadequacy of the analogy: "Oui, mais ce n'est pas à dire que le peintre qui ne peut travailler sans pinceaux, quand, avec ses pinceaux, il aura perdu ses couleurs, ses crayons, ses toiles et ses coquilles, qu'alors il le pourra mieux faire. Bien au contraire !" (154). As Alcover has shown (69-70), the youth is tying the functions of the soul to the body, and Dyrcona correctly sees that he is implying the soul's materiality (154). He objects on the grounds of the problems that a material soul implies for the Resurrection, but the increasingly irreligious youth queries, "qui vous a bercé de ce Peau-d'Âne ?" (154-55). For the youth, the resurrection has no more validity than a fairy tale, and one might suppose that whoever believes appears as an ass. From Dyrcona's hypothesis of an immortal, immaterial soul, the youth quickly arrives at a material, mortal one, after having begun his demonstration with a comparison to animals.

For Georges Mongrédien the physicality of the soul resides in its dependence on the senses and he interprets this exchange as evidence of Cyrano's non-dualistic conception of humanity. Cyrano does not deny the spirituality of the soul outright, but the soul "ne peut pas

subsister, et encore moins survivre seule, sans le soutien de la matière” (189-90). Alcover makes a similar point. She argues that for Cyrano the soul was, in fact, immortal, by virtue of its materiality:

L'énergie de Savinien [Cyrano] est une force indestructible, et c'est pourquoi nous pouvons affirmer que l'Âme est éternelle. On pourrait objecter que le Jeune Homme a soutenu le contraire. En fait, il réfutait seulement l'âme spirituelle et individuelle du dogme chrétien. Il est évident, par contre, que l'âme étant matérielle, et c'est ce que le Jeune Homme voulait démontrer, elle est forcément éternelle. (168-69)

The individual soul does not exist, only matter, which is in a state of constant change, continually taking new forms. Thus, the main consideration is the materiality of the soul, just as this is the main point of attack for Gassendi in the *Disquisitio Metaphysica*.

Dyrcona's first conversation with the moon youth about the nature of the soul takes place within the scope of a critique of human presumptions of superiority. The second conversation deals with the question of the nature of the soul more for its own sake, within the framework of a critique of religion. In both cases the nature of animals introduces the debate between Dyrcona and the youth. This fact is hardly surprising given the fact that the Gassendi-Descartes controversy coincided with the construction of *L'Autre monde*, but rather gives evidence in support of the influence of the controversy and resulting importance of the question of the soul of animals in literary circles.

Conclusion

Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* challenges an anthropocentric understanding of the universe by supposing the existence of other worlds, thereby removing the uniqueness and centrality of the Earth, and by peopling those worlds with reasoning, language-using creatures that do not fall into the category of human. Dyrcona first experiences the difficulty of

establishing language ability between two parties unfamiliar with each other's idiom in America before arriving on the moon where his own ability to use language is in doubt. While on the moon he must defend his own humanity. His experience shows that reasonable arguments are readily available to demonstrate his lack of defining human characteristics, equally as powerful as arguments on Earth that divest animals of language and reasoning ability. By putting humans in the place of animals, Cyrano adopts a skeptical stance and illustrates the weakness of the anthropocentric position that claims prerogatives over animals without adequate cause as earlier thinkers such as Montaigne and La Mothe Le Vayer have done.

The rhetorical use of animals for skeptical purposes continues when Dyrcona enters the republic of birds in the second volume of *L'Autre monde*, but humanity is on trial in another sense as Dyrcona feels the full wrath of species-centric ideology and its attendant prejudices. Humanity is a monstrosity, a disturbance to the natural order, and merits nothing more than extermination. Dyrcona's plight illustrates the potential tyranny inherent in dogmatic thinking with respect to human superiority, and by placing his protagonist in the animal's position, Cyrano brings to life the injustice of anthropocentrism. The adventures of Dyrcona ridicule human presumption via a reversal of roles that brings to light the absurdity of a universe that revolves around humanity. The protagonist's position in each story teaches him the relative place of humanity in the universe, from the perspective Serroy adopts: "Cyrano apprend, entre Terre et Ciel, à apprécier l'homme pour ce qu'il est par rapport aux autres êtres vivants et à la matière universelle ; et il en tire une sagesse qui consiste à vivre en conformité avec les lois naturelles" (RR 425). The humanity of *L'Autre monde* has no more claim to the heavens than animals, the four-legged creatures of the moon or the birds of the sun. Humans' status as material beings relegates them to the same natural laws as the rest of the universe.

Although the emphasis on the humbling of humanity and the debunking of anthropocentrism constitutes a continuation of a skeptical tradition that extends to Montaigne, the recourse to the nature of animals in discussions of the nature of the human soul is evidence of the more recent influence of the Gassendi-Descartes controversy. Following Descartes's demonstrations of the immateriality of the soul, his exposition of the animal-machine, and Gassendi's rhetorical use of animals to question Descartes's proof of the immateriality of the soul, animals are more prevalent in discussions of the nature of the human soul. Animals are prominent in Dyrcona's conversations about the nature of human soul with the moon youth; therefore Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* represents the change Isabelle Moreau remarks in *Guérir du sot* (452).

CHAPTER 6: GABRIEL DE FOIGNY'S *LA TERRE AUSTRALE CONNUE*

Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre australe connue*, appearing in 1676, is the account of the adventures of the ship-wrecked Sadeur in foreign lands, particularly in Australia. The inclusion of the text in critical works on utopias attests to its debt to the genre, while critics such as Pierre Ronzeaud and Jean-Michel Racault state the importance of travel narratives to the structure of Foigny's novel. For Racault, the protagonist's stay in Australia is a utopian "séquence centrale" that Foigny embeds in "la trajectoire circulaire qui est celle du voyage, l'itinéraire de retour répondant à l'itinéraire du départ" (UN 458). Pierre Ronzeaud's *L'Utopie hermaphrodite* is the most comprehensive study of *La Terre australe connue*. Ronzeaud considers the text as a travel narrative and a utopia to arrive at a consistent interpretation of its meaning. He concludes that "Le récit de voyage qu'il [Foigny] nous présente n'est pas celui d'une navigation aventureuse vers les antipodes, mais celui d'un périple à l'intérieur de sa propre culture, revenant invariablement au point de départ tant fui : l'enseignement du christianisme" (319).

Like Racault, Ronzeaud interprets Australian society as a utopia at the center of the circular journey the text describes. Ronzeaud hypothesizes that Foigny constructs a utopian society on the basis of prelapsarian existence:

Il a remplacé la division des sexes par le maintien de l'androgynie primordiale, la Chute par l'immobilisation en l'état d'innocence originelle, la béance du désir par la plénitude, la culpabilité et l'angoisse par la sérénité ataraxique, le temps par l'éternité, la disparition individuelle par la fusion universelle, la crainte du jugement par la certitude de la justice, la folie de la Croix par le vertige de la Raison. (319)

Ronzeaud notes that Pierre Bayle already recognizes the implication in Foigny's text that the Australians are the descendants of "un androgyne qui ne déchet point comme lui de son état d'innocence" in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (UH 13).

Despite the solid case Ronzeaud makes for his interpretation of Foigny's utopia, he admits that there are "éléments du texte du Foigny qui semblent poser problème" to his hypothesis, and he invites "d'autres recherches sur le sens et la cohérence" of Foigny's work (15). This chapter does not attempt to give a comprehensive reading, but rather explores one of the "germes hétérogènes" that make up the "amalgame fait de débris d'autres discours" that is *La Terre australe connue* (Ronzeaud 12). It is possible to read the text as a flight from and return to animality, where animality refers to characteristics the author associates with animals.

Animality in *La Terre australe connue* is germane to the purpose of this dissertation because it offers evidence of a shift from earlier rhetorical uses of animals focussing on similarities and differences between the two with the goal of questioning presumptions of human superiority to the rhetorical use of animals in considerations of the nature of the human soul in the wake of the Gassendi-Descartes controversy.

Although there is no conclusive evidence that Foigny was familiar with Descartes's work, Pierre Ronzeaud sees "nombreuses similitudes" between the arguments concerning the existence and nature of God in the *Méditations* and those appearing in Foigny's text (179). He goes so far as to state, regarding the *Méditations métaphysiques*, that Foigny "les avait sans doute lues" (242). Regardless of the possibility of direct influence, Foigny's Australians represent an extreme consequence of a Cartesian mind-body split that conceives of reason as separate from and superior to the body, relegating the passions to an inferior corporeal existence. The Australians abhor sensual pleasures. Their essence is found in their reason, and their bodily

existence is a humiliating reminder of their resemblance to animals. Foigny's text illustrates the conflict of this conception of human nature via the story of Sadeur, who is unable to extricate himself from his bodily desires and assimilate to Australian culture.

It is not the intent of this chapter to imply that Foigny intentionally addressed Cartesian thought or contributed to the skeptical use of animals in French texts that preceded the construction of his tale. Foigny's intent is difficult to fix, as Ronzeaud notes so poetically: "Voulant rivaliser avec le Créateur de l'univers, le créateur de *La Terre Australe* n'aura donc pas réussi à imiter son modèle, et à éterniser, immuable, parfaitement plein et cohérent, le sens de son ouvrage" (320). One reason for this difficulty may lie in Foigny's own character, which may have intruded upon a design he had for the story. Sadeur's story reflects Gabriel de Foigny's own.

J. Max Patrick makes the connection to Foigny's experiences in France and Switzerland, noting that the Australian society Foigny constructs is a response to "the intransigence of both Roman Catholicism and Calvinism" (740). Likewise, Frédéric Lachèvre, who established a rough biography of Foigny's life primarily from Swiss documents, attributes the inspiration for Foigny's creation of his Australian hermaphrodites directly to Foigny's life and character: "Cette idée baroque de l'Androgynisme a pu lui venir sans aucun intermédiaire. Il nous décrit une société à son image : gaspillant ce qu'il gagnait au fur et à mesure qu'il le gagnait, incapable de créer une vraie famille, n'ayant le souci que de son moi" (34). Lachèvre's description implies a dysfunctional society, but Patrick believes that *La Terre australe connue* represents Foigny's effort to create "a society where the nature of humanity and its institutions was more perfect" (740). The text fluctuates between utopian and dystopian descriptions of Australian society, and it is unclear as to whether the society is progressing toward perfection or falling into ruin.

The connection between the life of Foigny and the protagonist of *La Terre australe connue* is particularly strong with regard to sexuality. Lachèvre's implicates Foigny's "tempérament voluptueux," "paillardise," and "conduite scandaleuse" as reasons for his departure from monastic life in France (4). Shortly after his relocation to Switzerland in 1666, he courts a widow whom he then abandons to seek marriage with a girl "d'une réputation détestable" (Lachèvre 5). When the widow complains about the treatment she has received, an investigation is made into Foigny's morals and the Genevan pastors in charge discover that "il a attenté à la pudeur de plusieurs servantes" (Lachèvre 6). In 1684, following the death of his wife, he is in prison for "paillardise," having impregnated his servant Jeanne Berlie (Lachèvre 51). Foigny's sexual escapades form in part his poor reputation which causes him to move from Geneva to Lausanne to Morges to Geneva again, and following the scandal of his affair with Jeanne Berlie he abandons both Switzerland and Calvinism (Lachèvre 59).

La Terre australe connue appeared while Foigny lived in Switzerland, and it is a satire of European culture and specifically of Genevan society. The text is also something more for Foigny. Beyond the goal of publishing a work that might prove popular and generate income for his family, it seems likely that the writing of *La Terre australe connue* was a cathartic act for Foigny, a means to express his frustration and also expose his beliefs. Lachèvre assumes that "la tarentule de l'orgueil" stung Foigny and that "il sentait le besoin de dévoiler à l'Univers le grand homme inconnu qu'il se croyait être," but this is as much speculation as anything else (33). Patrick's account of Foigny's intent is just as plausible: "Foigny's utopia is the projection of his problems upon a wider screen, an attempt to face them and to think his way through them, and an effort to reconcile his desire for liberty with the need for order and discipline" (741). Our impressions agree with Patrick's opinion. As a result, it is not our intention to attribute particular

philosophical opinions to Foigny; Pierre Ronzeaud discusses the difficulty of understanding Foigny via *La Terre australe connue*, including an overview of the “l’incroyable éventail des appréciations portées sur ce diable d’homme” by literary critics that show the “complexité de la question” (166), in the third chapter of *L’Utopie hermaphrodite*.

Rather than assume a connection between the various philosophical opinions present in the text and Foigny’s own beliefs, this chapter examines the passages that indicate commonality between humans and animals, point to language and reasoning ability in animals, and discussions of the nature of the soul that involve animals. These passages constitute a rhetorical use of animals that questions the preeminence of reason and criticizes the mind-body split. Foigny’s position on the question of the immateriality and immortality of the soul is not entirely clear, though Pierre Ronzeaud believes that “les références culturelles qui sous-tendent le discours des Australiens trahissent sa prise de position anti-cartésienne en la matière” (156). The importance of the discussions of the nature of the soul for this dissertation rest not in Foigny’s beliefs, whatever they might have been, but in the inclusion of references to animals, which indicates the influence of the Gassendi-Descartes controversy.

Language and Reason in *La Terre australe connue*

Like earlier authors, Foigny treats the nature of language and its connection to reasoning ability. The question of animal language is important to arguments both for and against animal reasoning ability, as reason is generally a prerequisite for language use in each case.

The most explicit treatment of the possibility of animal language occurs prior to Sadeur’s arrival in Australia proper, when he finds himself on an island following a shipwreck surrounded by “certaines especes de chevaux, mais avec des têtes pointuës & des pattes qui finissoient en

griffes” and “certaines especes de gros chiens, & plusieurs autres sortes d’animaux qui n’ont rien de semblable dans l’Europe” (53-54).²⁸ Sadeur tentatively attributes emotion to their appearance, noting them to be “d’un air, selon qu’il me paroissoient, fort gay & comme étonnez de voir ce qu’ils n’avoient sans doute iamais veu” (54). Sadeur’s decision to speak to the animals immediately follows this appraisal, and Foigny perhaps means to imply that it is because of the appearance of these human-like emotions that Sadeur chooses to address the animal throng.

His words receive a response implying comprehension on the part of the animals and that conveys meaning to Sadeur: “Je leur dis en langue Castillane ‘Dieu vous garde mes amies’. Et à même tems elles firent un bruit qui étoit, se me sembloit de ioye & d’alegresse” (54). Sadeur originally remarks only what appears to be emotion among the animals and remains skeptical about the joy he reads into the noises they emit. Sadeur’s attitude marks a prejudice against the possibility of animal language. Affirming this prejudice is a later passage where Sadeur shows a similar skepticism regarding the reasoning ability of the monster birds, the Urg, during battle with the Australians: “D’abord que les oyseaux apperçoivent l’armée qui vient contre eux, ils se separant d’une dexterité qui peut passer pour un stratageme tres spirituel” (210).

Sadeur’s next utterance to the island’s animals, however, indicates an acceptance of the communication taking place. He interprets the joy the animals express as a sign of their anticipation of a good meal: “I’ajoutay, ‘vou[s] m’êtes bien obligées, puis que je suis venu de si loin pour vous divertir, & pour être vôte victime’. Comme elles redoubloient leurs cris, ie me

²⁸ Pierre Ronzeaud preserves the spelling, punctuation and the grammar of the original text “de façon à donner à lire le roman tel qu’il se présentait pour ses premiers lecteurs” and “de façon à fournir en même temps un document utilisable pour les lexicographes et pour les historiens de la grammaire” due to the “langue parfois erratique” of Foigny, irregular even in its own time (Introduction XXXI).

resolus de vendre plutôt ma vie que de la donner avec lâcheté” (54). Sadeur judges these new expressions of joy as an affirmation of his fears.

The communication going on between the two parties is quite possibly miscommunication. Sadeur immediately interprets the animals’ interest in him as purely carnal. That he expects to be their “victime” is another expression of his own prejudices regarding animals which confines their being to corporality. Notwithstanding the claws of the horse-like creatures, there is no sign in the appearance or behavior of the animals that indicates violent intent. Their appearance “fort gay” and their cries of “ioye & d’alegresse,” communications which constitute language for Montaigne but fall short of the requirements Descartes demands, are open to multiple interpretations. Neither he nor the reader know the meaning behind the animals’ behavior, and so there is no necessary connection between the animals’ actions and Sadeur’s interpretation of them.

Sadeur, and not the animals, instigate violent interaction between the two. When the two animals who approached Sadeur return to the others after having been attacked, the animals’ “voix de réjouissance se changerent en hurlement” and Sadeur is “saisi d’une extreme crainte par le redoublement des cris effroyables” (54). The two animals who first approach Sadeur play the role of emissaries. Although Sadeur’s attack is plain for all to see, the animals wait until the two emissaries report back to interpret their reception. Sadeur has rejected the animals’ advances based upon his inability to correctly interpret their behavior. His own prejudices concerning animal language and reasoning ability render him incapable of understanding their actions; he jumps to conclusions.

Conversely, Sadeur shows no skepticism towards the Australians’ ability to communicate, indication that he associates language ability with a human form. In his first

encounter with the Australians during his rescue following a battle with two bird creatures, he immediately attempts to communicate with the Australians via hand signs (62). This is also the case when during his return to Europe Sadeur encounters an old man from an unknown land clad only in a loin-cloth in Madagascar. Although the governor of Madagascar doubts the possibility of communication with the stranger, Sadeur begins with signs and progresses to spoken language:

Ie l'aborday, & luy ayant témoigné par plusieurs signes que j'étois réduit à la même misere que luy, il fit parêtre quelque marque de consolation. Apres trois ou quatre entreveuës, ie trouvay le moyen de m'expliquer comme il suit. Nous convinmes par signes de prendre certains mots pour expliquer nos pensées, & j'en formay près de deux cens en une nuit, qu'il comprit facilement : & nous formames une façon de parler en deux mois assez exacte pour nous entendre & comprendre nos conceptions. (234-35)

The two men are able to communicate their thoughts and learn a common language, demonstrating their reasoning ability by Descartes' standards, but Sadeur never makes similar attempts with the animals he encounters so that the possession of a Cartesian reason among the extraordinary animals of Australia remains a question.

Following his subsequent arrival in Australian territory, his interaction with a group of its inhabitants in some ways parallels Sadeur's contact with the island animals. The fact that the Australians treat Sadeur's wounds while he is nearly senseless from his battle with the monstrous birds, as well as the fact that they see to his lodging and nourishment "avec un soin, une diligence & une honnêteté qui surpassent la civilité des plus spirituels Europeens" (66) assures their benignity in a way the "fort gay" (54) appearance of the island animals cannot, while their human form and customs vouch for their reasoning ability. Rather than "deux des plus grosses" (54) island creatures, "deux cens jeunes Australiens" come to greet the rehabilitating Sadeur "d'une façon gaye & obligeante" (66), which mirrors the appearance of his former animal

emissaries. The recuperating visitor recognizes that he is dealing with the island's inhabitants and not other voyagers such as himself. His hosts are inhabitants of a strange land, just as the animals he has already encountered, but he makes different assumptions about their ability to understand language.

When Sadeur addresses the Australians, he speaks in a Congolese dialect rather than a European idiom: "Comme je ne trouvay mieux, la démangeaison que j'avois de parler, me fit souvenir de certains mots, que j'avois retenus de Congo, 'rim lem': c'est à dire, 'je suis vôtre serviteur'" (66-67). He offers a greeting just as he had to the island animals, and the reaction of the Australians is identical to the animals' response: "Cela fit qu'ils s'écrierent avec des signes de joye" (67). In this case, however, the Australians' cries turn out to be words that Sadeur later learns to mean "nôtre frere" based on a confusion between what Sadeur has said and "je suis du pays superieur" (67) in the Australian language.

Thus, although the fact that both Sadeur and the Australians are speaking a viable language which meets even Descartes' exacting standards is sure, it is still arguable that in this first linguistic encounter with the Australians communication is not taking place on a level more complicated than the communication which took place between Sadeur and the island animals. Both involve miscommunication. The main difference between the two encounters is Sadeur's attitude. He is skeptical of the animals' ability to communicate and meets them with fear and violence, while he is open to and accepting of the Australians, showing a prejudice for the human form which he aligns with reasoning and language ability. The passages constitute a rhetorical use of animals in the skeptical tradition because they imply a criticism of superiority humans assume based on their assumption that animals do not possess reasoning and language ability.

The Australian Body

The rhetorical use of animals in the skeptical tradition also manifests in the Foigny's treatment of the Australian body. Both the Australians and Sadeur are hermaphrodites. Pierre Ronzeaud examines the phenomenon of hermaphroditism in literature in detail in his *L'Utopie hermaphrodite*, developing in particular its religious significance, detailing its employ by Foigny to illustrate "un modèle humain exempt de toute partition, rejoignant la perfection originelle, remettant le Paradis sur terre et l'homme, en osmose avec cette nature, dans un état de plénitude idéale, lui permettant de redevenir le reflet de la perfection de Dieu, le Tout-Un" (50), explaining the resemblance of Australian society to seventeenth-century religious sects such as the Adamites (59), and making a host of other insightful observations in the first chapter of his text. Prior to Ronzeaud, René Démoris already recognizes Foigny's use of hermaphroditism to resolve human social problems by achieving unity, but without developing its religious connotations: "L'abolition de cette dualité [sexual] entraîne la suppression de toutes les autres, qui font le malheur et la faiblesse de l'homme normal" (172). Foigny's hermaphroditism saves him from death: "les deux sexes m'étoient nécessaires sous peine d'être perdu à mon arrivée, comme on verra dans la suite ; il falloit que je fusse tout nud, ou j'aurois été reconnu d'abord & assommé" (65). Sadeur is alluding to the Australians' antagonism towards non-hermaphroditic beings.

Humanity as Sadeur knows it in Europe is based on a division in sexes, and hermaphrodites are "si rares" that they "passoient pour monstrueux" (90). Hermaphrodites are monstrous in European society because they controvert the general flow of nature; the opposite is true in Australia: "Tous les Australiens ont les deux sexes : & s'il arrive qu'un enfant naisse avec un seul, ils l'étouffent comme un monstre" (83). For the Australians, only the hermaphroditic body is complete and they consider beings with only one sex incomplete half-

men. Half-men are, in other words, half-animals: “Ce jeu sur les frontières de l’animalité permet subtilement la remise en question de l’homme dans son unicité et prépare le travail de déstabilisation apporté par l’utopie hermaphrodite, où l’homme sexué est de fait dégradé en demi-homme et assimilé à la bête” (Moreau, HBF 52). Paradoxically, although the Australians denigrate corporality, they establish their difference and superiority via the distinction they draw between themselves and half-men and other animals.

The Australians conclude the superiority of their bodily form from the inherent perfection of hermaphroditism. The Australian Suains expresses this opinion when he asserts that those with one sex are imperfect by arguing that it is “un principe du raisonnement d’appeller une chose parfaite, qui avoit tout ce qui étoit requis à son établissement” (90-91). Since hermaphrodites possess both sexes from birth, they are complete and hence perfect. On the contrary, those with one sex are lacking and hence imperfect:

Or de grace, n’est-ce pas plus de perfection de contenir seul ce qui est requis pour perfectionner le corps d’un homme, que de le partager ? Pour faire un homme entier, il faut deux sexes : pourquoi donc veux-tu faire deux hommes pour m’en représenter un seul ? & n’avons nous pas droit de dire que celui la est imparfait, qui n’en peut montrer que la moitié ? (91-92)

This perfection is also apparent in practical ways, such as reproduction, where a division into two sexes is disadvantageous: “Cette division d’operation ne peut fair une union parfaite, qu’elle fasse une identité : c’est pourquoy le produit ne peut être sans beaucoup de deffauts : & la nature qui a besoin des deux ensembles pour produire, les oblige de se rechercher, faisant que l’un soit en langueur, autant de tems qu’il est absent de l’autre” (94). The Australian also points out the difficulty of determining who the father of a child might be and whether the mother or the father oversee the child’s upbringing. Sadeur concedes both points (95-98). On these grounds Australians choose hermaphroditism as the essential dividing line between themselves and

animals: “Il faut donc convenir que la bête est bête, & a de la conformité avec une autre bête, en cela particulièrement que leurs sexes sont separez, & que les deux sexes doivent se joindre pour faire la production d’un semblable” (94).

Since the body establishes the Australians’ difference and superiority, they take particular care to reveal it, as Sadeur discovers: “La nudité de tout le corps leur est si naturel : qu’ils ne peuvent souffrir qu’on parle de les couvrir, sans se declarer ennemy de la nature & contraire à la raison” (84). Sadeur’s Australian interlocutor offers the reasons for the superiority of nudity when he attacks Sadeur’s defense of clothing on the basis of necessity:

Comment s’est il pô faire que tout un monde embrassât ce qui est si contraire à la nature ? Nous naissons ce que nous sommes, & on ne peut nous couvrir sans croire que nous sommes indignes d’être veus. D’ajouter foy à la rigueur des saisons que tu allegues, je ne puis & même je ne dois pas. Si le pays est insupportable, rien n’oblige celui qui sait raisonner d’en faire sa patrie : & il faut être pis que bête pour faire sejour où on n’est accueilly que de maux, sur tout quand ils sont mortels. (102-03)

The use of clothing reveals the shame Europeans have of their bodies but their lack of reason, as well. Unlike Sadeur’s people, the Australians exalt in their body’s form, placing emphasis on their sex organs. The hermaphrodite’s genitals are perfection in terms of reproduction, and in terms of human beauty as well, as Sadeur’s interlocutor explains: “l’homme n’a rien de plus beau que l’homme même, & il n’est beau que par la beauté de ses parties. Aussi tost qu’on les cache, on declare qu’elles sont indignes d’être veuës. Enfin on ne me fera jamais comprendre qu’on puisse cacher avec justice, ce qu’on juge parfait & agreable” (104). Hermaphroditism is the outward sign of the Australians’ perfection, the respect they show for the bodily characteristic that distinguishes them from animals explains the reception they afford Sadeur when he first arrives in their territory, kissing “les mains & les parties” (66).

The merit the Australians impart to their own bodies, focusses on the one bodily feature that distinguishes them from animals. The Australians refuse to admit that other aspects of their corporality that suggest a kinship with animals imply a shared nature. Sadeur's Australian sounding board refutes arguments to this effect when he refuses to admit that sharing a body similar to animals proves that humans and animals are of a same nature, but he also dismisses the idea that the mind and body are unequivocally distinct: "Ce que tu dis que nous convenons avec la bête en ce que nous avons un même corps est une erreur : & de distinguer l'esprit de l'homme de son corps comme on separeroit une piece d'une autre piece, c'est encore une erreur plus lourde" (92). Suains' conception of humanity is holistic: "L'union de ces deux parties est telle que l'une est absorbée dans l'autre" (92). Lise Leibacher-Ouvrard interprets Suains' mind-body continuum as Cartesian: "L'imbrication de l'âme et du corps pourrait paraître proche de celle proposée par la 'Sixième Méditation' cartésienne," but as she herself points out, "la substance de ces deux éléments, la manière dont l'homme a conscience de leur dualité, et l'explication de leur union restent généralement ambiguës" (74). The Australian's argument more clearly expresses the inextricability of mind and body à la Montaigne, who sees no need or means to properly distinguish the two. The passage implies that an opposing view that separates the mind from the body, such as Descartes's philosophy which distinguishes the two substantially, is a faulty attempt to distinguish humans from animals.

A holistic understanding of humanity implies that nothing about humans is not essentially human, whether mental or physical. The conclusion of Suains' argument bears this out: "toutes les operations imaginables ne tireront jamais une partie du corps de l'homme qui ne soit de l'homme, & qui ne le distingue de la bête : c'est à dire, qui ne soit tellement de l'homme qu'elle ne puisse être de la bête. Par consequent il faut convenir que l'homme est distingué de la bête

par tout ce qui est de l'homme même, & qu'il n'a rien qui ne luy convienne privativement à la bête" (92-93). Since everything about humans is indicative of human nature, it is a contradiction to say that anything about humans indicates an animal nature. In effect, Suains is arguing that similarities between humans and animals cannot establish commonality between the two since being similar to animals is not the same thing as being identical to them.

Sadeur attempts to counter Suains' argument by bringing the similarities between animals and humans to a more general level where humans and animals are identical, pointing out that Australians and other animals share the common feature of flesh: "Peut-on nier...que l'homme convienne avec la bête en chair, en os, & en sens ? ne dit-on pas de l'un et de l'autre qu'il a de la chair, qu'il voit, qu'il entend, & ne l'expérimente t'on pas autant de fois qu'on y fait réflexion ?" (93). Sadeur leaves logical argument behind and makes an appeal to direct experience, but the Australian dismisses his attempt with a convoluted argument that reveals his own bias in favor of a distinction between Australians and other living creatures:

Toutes les conceptions chimeriques dont tu t'entretiens ne sont que des foiblesses de ton raisonnement, qui unit ce qui ne se peut joindre, & qui desunit souvent ce qui est inseparable. Par exemple, quand on dit que la chair en general convient également à l'homme & à la bête, nous entendons que le mot de chair peut être appliqué à l'un & à l'autre, à cause de quelque analogie qui leur est commune. Mais un foible cerveau conçoit que la chair de l'un est la chair de l'autre : ce qui est une contradiction manifeste, puis qu'il est impossible qu'une chose en soit une autre, en quel sens qu'on la puisse prendre. (93-94)

By this reasoning, there is no basis for similarity between even the flesh of one Australian and another. That this argument leads directly into the Australian's assertion that "la bête est bête...en cela particulièrement que leurs sexes sont separez" (94) is evidence that the argument is the result of a preconception, and that this prejudice leads to reasoning just as faulty as that which Europeans employ to distinguish humans from animals. Jean-Michel Racault summarizes the Australian prejudicial position: "La représentation que les Australiens se font d'eux-mêmes

s'appuie sur un anthropocentrisme totalitaire qui affirme la singularité et la solitude de l'homme parmi les êtres créés et récuse d'avance toute possibilité de rapports de sympathie et de solidarité avec le reste de l'univers" (UN 501). The Australians' feelings of superiority rest upon their presupposition that they are distinct from the rest of creation.

Pierre Ronzeaud notes that the inherent superiority the Australians assign to their hermaphroditic selves has some parallels with the "force prodigieuse" of Plato's androgynes, whom the Gods punish for their rebellion, and consequently weaken, by dividing them into two sexes. The "haute taille" of the Australians is "peut-être aussi une marque de supériorité originelle conservée par un peuple qui n'aurait pas été affaibli par la division des sexes et réduit physiquement par une sorte d'usure 'historique' due aux maux, aux peines, aux passions" (Ronzeaud, UH 49). Ronzeaud's conjecture adds another symbolic element of superiority to the Australian body.

That the Australian infers faulty reasoning from Sadeur's explanations of European beliefs implies that he confers reasoning ability to non-Australians, but Suains makes another specious argument in the defense of reason as an Australian privilege. The belief results from the Australian prejudices for Australian superiority as their hermaphroditism indicates. The Australian suspends judgment concerning Sadeur's ability to reason because of the hermaphroditism he shares with the Australians, but upon hearing Sadeur's depiction of the use of reason in his homeland he denies European reasoning ability:

Tu n'accorderas jamais l'usage du raisonnement avec l'exclusion des deux sexes : & ce que tu ajoutes, que plusieurs raisonnent entre vous, & qu'on y fait des leçons du raisonnement en plusieurs lieux, prouve que le raisonnement est banni de chez vous. Le premier fruit du raisonnement est de se connoître ; & cette connoissance emporte par nécessité deux choses : l'une, que pour faire un homme, il faut qu'il soit entier : l'autre, qu'il raisonne, ou du moins qu'il puisse raisonner librement & quand il luy plait, Vous manquez au premier, puis que vos hommes sont tous

imparfaits : vous manquez au second, puis que vous n'avez que peu de personnes qui puissent raisonner. (90)

More than an argument, the Australian's reasoning is the assertion of dogmatic positions.

Humanity is dependent upon hermaphroditism and reasoning ability. An understanding of this dogmatic position is dependent upon the possession of reason, without which one cannot "se connoître" (90). The Australian effectively excludes non-Australians from reasoning ability as a matter of definition. To preserve Australian exclusivity of reason, Sadeur's interlocutor arbitrarily sets limits that separate European reasoning from Australian reasoning, and downgrades reasoning on the European side of his limit to non-reason. This parallels the distinction made by Descartes who refused to recognize thought processes not exclusive to humans as reasoning, as opposed to a thinker like Gassendi who admitted differences between human and animal rationality while according reason of a limited sort to animals. In light of this parallel, the dogmatic position of the Australians implies the skeptical position that the limits between humans and animals are arbitrary.

The Australians make every attempt to distinguish every feature of their bodies from the body of animals and half-men using whatever reasons that support their belief. Their prejudices for the Australian form, however, reside principally in the perfection they argue for the hermaphroditic body. As their hermaphroditism is a feature that distinguishes them from other living beings, they see it as a mark of their superiority, making arguments to that effect much in the way Europeans argue for human superiority on the basis of an upright stature. They also tie the possession of both sexes to the possession of reason, which the Australians esteem above all else. Therein lies the paradox. While the Australians distinguish themselves from animals and half-men via their hermaphroditism, venerating their bodies as a result, and believe the soul and the body to consist in a union "telle que l'une est absorbée dans l'autre" (92), their customs and

behavior exhibit a disdain for corporality, which they equate with animality. As Jean-Michel Racault explains, disdain for animality and the body that represents it results in a desire to separate humanity from the body as much as possible : “Le corps, envisagé dans ses diverses fonctions, apparaît donc comme le lieu d’élection d’une dérive entropique vers une animalité exécrée avec laquelle l’humanité supérieure du monde utopique tient au plus haut point à marquer sa rupture” (NPE 240). The Australians’ relationship to the body illustrates Racault’s point perfectly save for their veneration of their hermaphroditism, but the exaltation of the hermaphroditic form does serve the function of displaying the superiority of the Australians. The superiority of the hermaphroditic body is not in the body itself, but in the spiritual perfection that it represents.

Australian Disdain for Corporality and Animality

The privileged position that reason holds in Australian society is one major indication of their contempt for the body, as Racault explains: “la parfaite raison, opposée aux passions et aux instincts du monde animal” serves as an absolute criteria for the “rupture instaurée entre le monde animal et le monde humain” (UN 501-02). Sadeur remarks that the Australians “ont tant d’ardeur pour être estimez de grand jugement : qu’ils ne se mettent en peine que d’exceller en ce point. De là vient qu’ils se piquent d’embrasser tout ce qu’on peut leur proposer de plus conforme à la raison” (149). As a result the Australians have evolved into a race that experiences little in the way of passions and uses reason as its guiding force: “Comme ils n’ont nul principe d’alteration : ils vivent dans une espece d’indifference, sans autre mouvement, que celui que la raison leur imprime” (140).

The Australians' lack of passion extends even to their most physical activities, such as athletic games: "Ce qui est plus remarquable dans ces exercices, c'est qu'ils les font d'un air gay bien que grave & majestueux, sans desordre, & sans alteration quelconque" (159). The bland gaiety Sadeur perceives here, and earlier when the Australians greet him when he first arrives, is one of the only emotions they ever express. Even in war, they remain impassible and ordered, with reason as their guide:

Ce qui surpasse tous les sujets d'admiration, c'est de voir que sans aucun conducteur, sans âvertissement, & même sans se parler, il savent se poster avec tant d'exactitude & d'adresse : que jamais soldat pour bien commandé & conduit qu'il soit, n'a été plus ponctuel ny mieux dressé qu'ils le sont. Ceux qui sont les premiers avancent faisant face, selon le besoin qu'ils connoissent. Un chacun a la raison pour guide, à laquelle ils s'unissent tous, avec un tel soin qu'on diroit, ou qu'ils ne sont qu'un même, ou qu'ils sont tous autant d'admirables conducteurs, qui n'ont qu'un même dessein, & un même moyen pour l'exécution. (191)

The Australians demonstrate the result of reason without passion, or someone who discards their previous prejudices and the influence of the passions following Cartesian method to arrive at the correct use of reason to "distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, pour voir clair en [s]es actions, et marcher avec assurance en cette vie" (DM 56). Ironically, such a person becomes as a part in a machine, to the extent that one individual is indistinguishable from another. The indistinguishability of the individuals renders the question of whether the Australians are one or merely move according to the same reasonable conclusions moot. The Australians are just as machine-like in their actions as an animal whose behavior conforms to its sensory perception and passions.

The unity of the Australians is another distinguishing feature of their people,²⁹ which they see as a direct result of their reason, an essential part of their being. The old Australian Suains

²⁹ This unity exists despite a lack of political structure. Trousson (106) and Berneri (197) both recognize Foigny's Australia as one of the earliest utopias without government, and Antoine

explains: “Ce mot d’homme qui emporte par une suite nécessaire, la raison & l’humanité, nous oblige à l’union qui est telle, que nous ne savons pas même ce que c’est que division & discorde entre nous” (99). Missing from Suains’ definition is any reference to the hermaphroditic body. Pure reason, uncorrupted by the passions, is the essence of humanity: “l’homme demeurant homme, étoit toujours homme, c’est à dire, humain, raisonnable, debonnaire, sans passion : parce que c’est en ce point que consiste la nature de l’homme” (100).

Coupled with the Australian exaltation of reason is a denigration of bodily functions, including eating. The Australians eat only fruit. In a reading that supports Ronzeaud’s interpretation of Foigny’s text as a prelapsarian utopia, Leibacher-Ouvrard describes their fruit as “miraculeux” and associates it with the “richesse naturelle” of the “Jardin édénique” (51). Bearing out this association is Sadeur’s observation that the fruits they cultivate are superior in terms of nutrition to anything found in Europe (Foigny 75-76) that implies the general superiority of the Australians, free from a sinful past, since they “ne viendraient pas d’Adam” (Leibacher-Ouvrard 55).

The Australian’s vegetarian diet also indicates a disdain for animals. The Australians believe that one’s diet influences one’s character and that by eating animal flesh one assumes animal characteristics: “Ils sont persuadez que la chair d’une brute est tellement modifiée à cette brute, qu’elle ne peut servir à la composition d’une autre, qu’elle ne luy ressemble, & qu’on ne devienne brute à proportion qu’on s’unit la chair de la bête” (178). The Australians refrain from eating meat as a result of this belief and their aversion to animals: “Ce mot de bête les rebutte

Adam goes so far as to describe Australian society as anarchy (304). Trousson notes that the lack of government is likely the result of Foigny’s own personality and attitudes: “Cette absence a de quoi surprendre chez un utopiste et, en ce qui concerne Foigny, on a voulu l’attribuer à la personnalité même de l’auteur, inadapté, rebelle à toute forme de contrainte sociale et passionné de liberté” (106-07).

tant, qu'ils souffriroient plutôt de n'être pas, que de communiquer de la sorte avec elle... Enfin l'antipatie est entiere entre eux & la bête, & si un Australien avoit mangé de la chair d'une bête, il croiroit devenir bête" (178). Being vegetarian allows the Australians to limit their contact with animals and protects them from the assimilation of animal substances and their attendant properties. It is a way of denying, or at least limiting, their own animality.

Nourishing themselves only with the extraordinary fruits of their land allows them to limit their animal functions in other ways, as well. One of the advantages of the Australian fruit diet is that it allows them to eat less frequently (75). The advantage stems from the fact that eating exposes their corporality and, hence, animality. Despite Suains' argument that humans differentiate themselves from animals in every way, the reality is that the Australians abhor the body's operation because it draws attention to their resemblance to animals. The fact that they must eat shames them: "Bien loin de faire gloire de manger & d'être somptueux en festin : ils se cachent, & ne mangent qu'en secret & comme à la dérobé. Ils n'ont nulle heure réglée pour leur repas, parce qu'ils jugent que c'est une action trop animale, de laquelle un homme devrait s'abstenir, s'il pouvoit" (140). Unable to eliminate an action they deem "trop animale," the Australians do the next best thing, limiting themselves to the ultra-nourishing fruit they cultivate, and secluding themselves during the act of eating as Europeans seclude themselves to defecate.

Since the fruit is so nourishing and they eat so little, the Australians are also able to limit the latter bodily act, as well: "De là provient, qu'ils ont si peu de besoin des necessitez que nous appellons communes : qu'à peine rendent ils quelques excréments en huit jours" (140). They have this advantage from birth, given the superiority of their mothers' milk: "Le lait que la mere

leur donne est si substantiel, qu'il leur suffit pendant deux ans : les excréments qu'ils jettent sont en si petite quantité, qu'on diroit qu'ils n'en rendent point" (138).

Their aversion to bodily functions also extends to procreation. The Australians' method of procreation puzzles Sadeur, but he is unable to satisfy his curiosity. The Australians despise all things corporeal to such an extent that they refuse to speak of reproduction: "Ils ont tant d'aversion d'ouïr parler de ces commencements, qu'un an ou environ après mon arrivée, en ayant entamé quelque discours en la compagnie de deux freres, ils se retirèrent de moy avec plus de signes d'horreur, que si i'eusse commis un crime" (135). Even the more philosophical and more tolerant Suains responds to Sadeur's inquiries with mystifications: "Un jour que je m'en découvris à mon vieux philosophe, apres m'avoir fait quelques censures sur ce sujet : il entra dans un long discours & m'étalla plusieurs preuves, pour m'obliger à croire que les enfans venoient dans leurs entrailles comme les fruits viennent sur les arbres" (135). Suains' explanation is akin to European stories for children of storks delivering babies or infants found under cabbage leaves. Suains' explanations divorce Australian reproduction from physicality, in particular, sexuality. Australian reticence regarding their method of procreation implies that there is a physical aspect and that this corporal aspect shames them.

One aspect of Australian reproduction that seems clear is the absence of mating between Australians. It is a crime to even speak of the possibility (85). Suains cites reproduction without physical union as an advantage of hermaphroditism³⁰: "cela fait que nous vivons sans ces ardeurs animales des uns pour les autres, & nous n'en pouvons même ouïr parler. Cela fait encor que nous pouvons vivre seuls, comme n'ayant besoin de rien. Enfin cela fait que nous sommes contents & que nôtre amour n'a rien de charnel" (94-95). The Australians equate sexuality with

³⁰ Marie Louise Berneri notes that Sadeur may intend to "satirize the Christian attitude to sex" by creating this sexless society (188).

the “ardeurs animales” of beasts. Other aspects of Australian reproduction known to Sadeur evidence a minimization of its corporality, at the very level of the sexual organs themselves: “Leurs parties sont fort petites, on n’y apperçoit rien de toutes ces décharges de la nature communes aux femmes qui ne sont pas enceintes” (137). The birth of the infant takes place without the same physical accompaniments as European births: “Ils ont un certain lieu élevé pour rendre leur fruit, où ils étendent les jambes & l’enfant tombe sur des feuilles du Balf,³¹ apres quoy la mere le prend, le frotte de ces feuilles, & l’allaitte sans jetter du sang, & sans faire semblant d’avoir souffert” (138). The blessing of the infant using the leaves of Balf is possibly a purification of the body, an attempt to remove the stain of physicality.

This interpretation necessitates understanding the Australian’s general attitude to physical birth as disdainful, which Racault’s reading of the succession of individuals in Australian society supports. Each Australian chooses a lieutenant that will take his place in society upon his death. Upon his succession “l’Australien accède à l’existence sociale, comme en une nouvelle naissance, publique celle-ci [as opposed to the Australian’s biological birth], qui efface et annule l’animalité liée à la naissance biologique” (Racault, UN 475). There are no bodily ties between an Australian and his successor.

The Australians’ lack of sexual desire allows for a more spiritual love which prevents them from viewing one another as possessions or physical things, as Suains says, living “comme n’ayant besoin de rien” (95). In fact, the Australian attitude towards possessions, implying a desire to free oneself of physicality, goes beyond the body and extends to a disdain for all materiality. Their focus on spirituality makes this desire partially achievable: “Ils ne savent ce que veut dire le mien & le tien : tout est commun entre eux, avec une sincerité si entiere que

³¹ A sacred Australian tree, “arbre de Beatitude” (76).

l'homme & la femme n'en peuvent avoir une plus parfaite parmi les Europeens" (85). The spiritual love between any two Australians exceeds the communal existence of couples whose marriage depends upon sexual attraction. The possessions the Australians share serve only to sustain them. Thus, they have as little understanding of greed as of personal possessions: "Ils regardent toutes nos étoffes, comme nous considerons nos toiles d'airainées : Ils ne savent ce que signifient les mots d'or & d'argent. En un mot, tout ce que nous croyons précieux passe en leur jugement pour ridicule & pour recherche de bêtes" (186). An esteem for frivolous possessions is an animal characteristic, a "recherche de bêtes," to the Australians.

Sadeur comes to understand the link between the Australians' scorn for possessions and a spiritual existence in his discussions with Suains:

Nous passâmes à la proposition de l'avarice, & ie connus tres bien qu'il n'en connoissoit que le nom [...] il [Suains] me fit entendre une foiblesse d'esprit de faire des amas de choses curieuses & sans profit. Tous les Australiens ont en abondance ce qui est requis à leur entretien : ils ne savent ce que c'est qu'amasser, ni même de garder quelque chose pour le lendemain ; d'où vient que leur vie peut passer pour une veritable image de la beatitude naturelle, n'y ayant bonnement que la veuë du futur qui nous fasse malheureux. (106-07)

The future Sadeur refers to is death, which the Australians crave. A desire for death is the ultimate disdain for the physical world.

The Australian contempt for life goes hand in hand with their reverence for reason and the spirituality of their essence. Sadeur's commentary on the Australians' desire for death illustrates this connection:

Ils conviennent tous que cette vie n'est qu'une agitation, qu'un trouble & qu'un tourment. Ils sont persuadez que ce que nous appellons la mort, est leur repos : & que le plus grand bien de la creature est d'y retourner au plus tost. Cette pensée fait qu'ils vivent non seulement avec indifférence pour la vie, mais même avec desir de mourir. Aussi tôt qu'ils s'apercevoient, que je témoignois quelque apprehension de la mort, ils se confirmoient dans la pensée que ie ne pouvois être homme, parce que ie manquois aux principes du vray raisonnement. (141)

When Suains expounds on the reasoning behind the Australians' desire for death, he highlights the difference between Australian and animal perception along with the encumbrance of the body:

Nous sommes differens des bêtes, en ce que leurs connoissances ne penetrant pas dans le fond des choses, elles ne tirent leurs consequences que de ce qui est apparent. De là suit qu'elles fuyent leur destruction comme leur plus grand mal, & qu'elles peinent pour leur conservation, comme pour leur plus grand bien ne considerant pas que c'est une peine vaine : & qu'étant une nécessité qu'elles perissent, le retard de perir n'est qu'un accroissement de leurs maux. Il faut pour raisonner à fond [...] que nous nous considerons dans un état de misere ; 1. Parce que nos actions étant attachées à un corps pesant, plus nous agissons, plus nous souffrons : & nous ne cessons de souffrir, qu'en cessant d'agir ; tellement que, parlant sincerément, desirer de vivre, c'est souhaiter de se peiner : & demander la mort, c'est aspirer au repos & à l'exemption de souffrir. (141-42)

Australians, unlike animals, understand that they must die. They also understand that their suffering is the result of the body, and that their suffering will only end when the body dies. For the Australians, a fear of death is unreasonable since death is inevitable. Clinging to life is unreasonable, because corporeal existence necessitates suffering. Faced with this knowledge, the only reasonable conclusion for the Australians is to choose death.

This choice also distinguishes the Australians from animals. Animals seek to preserve themselves because they lack reason; their attempts to stave off the inevitable are proof: "parce qu'être assuré de mourir tout à fait, se voir mourir à force de souffrance, ne pouvoir étendre sa vie sans une continuelle langueur, & chercher de ne point achever promptement de mourir sont des conduites qui ne peuvent être conceuës d'un esprit capable de raison" (144).

The possession of reason distinguishes Australians from animals, but the Australians make no claims for the immortality of the soul, nor, despite the perfection of their mortal form, for any divine privileges. Animals are at the center of the discussions about the nature of the human soul, in accordance with the shift in the rhetorical use of animals that takes place

following the Gassendi-Descartes controversy. Suains asserts that equality before God is the reasonable conclusion when considering his creatures: “Nous trouvons par nos raisonnements que toutes les creatures étant également siennes, il les regarde de même œil & de même affection” (124). The statement does not negate the Australians’ aversion to animality. An anti-animality without European religious justifications is only more powerful, as Moreau explains: “L’interdit de manger de la chair et l’horreur de l’animalité sont d’autant plus forts que les australiens récusent par ailleurs les principaux points de doctrine chrétienne qui permettraient de *justifier* leur supériorité ontologique” (HBF 49). Belief in the relative equality of humans and animals in the eyes of God ties in directly to the question of the mortality of the soul, since without reason to believe that God cherishes them more than other creatures, the Australians must determine such questions on the basis of empirical evidence.

In an examination of the similarities between animal and Australian death, the Australians find no difference between themselves and animals:

Nous sommes encore à chercher, s’il est quelque difference entre un homme mort & un autre animal parce que les suites étant les mêmes sans aucune difference, & n’y pouvant fonder de distinction, on n’en peut parler que par de conjectures fort legeres. Nous voyons à la verité qu’un homme vivant fait paroître plus de vivacité qu’une brute : mais c’est trop peu pour nous persuader qu’il luy reste quelque avantage sur elle apres la mort. Puis que les brutes qui ont plusieurs degrez de perfection entre elles, sont toutes égales en cette extremité : je ne puis former aucun jugement positif de l’excellence de l’homme apres sa mort, de ce qu’il excelle pendant sa vie. (124)

Some Australians do attempt to demonstrate an immortal soul, but Suains sees the prejudice for human supremacy at the core of their belief and the unresolvable problems their theories entail:

“Il en est cependant parmi nous qui trouvant trop d’opposition entre l’homme & la brute, ne peuvent souffrir qu’il meure tout à fait comme elle. Mais quand nous les voulons obliger d’expliquer la difference, ils hesitent, ils s’évanoüissent dans leurs pensées, & ils ne donnent

aucune satisfaction” (124). Foigny may be attempting to critique belief in the immortal soul. Ronzeaud concludes that Foigny depicts a material soul distinct from animals only in terms of degree of rationality: “Foigny, théoriquement, n’instaurera aucune coupure entre l’âme humaine et l’âme animale, toutes deux sont matérielles et elles ne se distinguent que par une différence de degré dans l’ordre de la rationalité” (157). He notes that by its materiality it resembles Gassendi’s soul, but differs in that there is but one soul for Foigny (157). Gassendi allows the rational soul to humans alone. Any hierarchisation between animals and humans in *La Terre australe connue* are on the order of “plus ou moins à l’intérieur d’un même ordre naturel” (Ronzeaud 157) à la Montaigne.

Australians like Suains have no hope for a better existence after their deaths, they simply resent life. The question remains as to why the Australians continue to exist, or why Suains himself, an older Australian, has not yet seen to his end. The Australians’ owe their continued existence as a species to the reasons they found to preserve their lives. Just as reason convinces them to jettison their lives, by reason they choose to remain living: “on trouva des raisons pour convaincre ceux qui restoient de s’épargner quelque tems. On leur remontra qu’il ne falloit pas rendre inutile une si belle & si grande terre : que nous faisons un ornement de cet univers : & que nous devons complaire au premier Souverain de toutes les façons” (147). In addition, the Australians decided to repopulate their territory by law, a remnant of which demands that each citizen provide a replacement for their position in Australian society before taking his life (147).

Although the Australians have reasons for preserving their civilization and extending their species’ run, they continue to denigrate life. Suains believes that the most compelling reason for this attitude is the discrepancy between the Australians’ perfections and their earthly existence:

Nous nous considerons ce que nous sommes, & ce que nous devrions être, nous savons que nous sommes fort notables, fort parfaits, & dignes d'une éternité. Nous voyons que nonobstant ces excellences, nous sommes obligez de dépendre de mille pieces, qui sont beaucoup au dessous de nous, & que nous sommes soûmis à la liberté d'un Souverain, qui ne nous a fait que pour nous changer, quand & comme il veut : & qui fait consister sa Toutepuissance à nous détruire, autant qu'à nous faire exceller. Voila ce qui nous chagrine, ce qui nous cause de l'ennuy : & qui fait que nous avons plus de penchant à n'être pas, qu'à être si élevez : pour nous voir autant & plus maltraitez, que les plus chetives & les plus abjectes creatures. Nous nous considerons comme des personnes qu'on n'éleve, que pour les rendre plus malheureuses : en quoy on nous traite pis que des bêtes, & il faut être plus insensible qu'elles, pour n'en être pas persuadé. (146)

The Australians recognize the equality of God's creatures and find the situation unjust. Racault sees the injustice and cruelty of the human condition, subject as it is to God's will, as a recurrent theme in the text that manifests in the continual misfortunes of Sadeur: "Sans être personnellement responsable des malheurs que suscite sa présence, Sadeur en porte cependant la culpabilité qu'une Providence maléfique le contraint malgré lui à assumer. Ainsi se dessine dans le non-dit du texte, et malgré les affirmations contraires, l'image d'un Dieu injuste et sadique se délectant de la souffrance de ses créatures" (UN 453). Sure of their relative perfection, their superiority, the Australians are unable to endure their animal-like existence. In essence, they believe their excellence entitles them to a stake in godhood, rendering their mortal, material existence humiliating and insufferable.

The Australians' War on Animality

Foigny perhaps intends to illustrate the Australians aversion to their animality by depicting the wars they wage. The Australians battle three major enemies: the Fondins, the "monstres marins," and the Urg. The Fondins are half-men, or humans, living in a territory adjacent to the Australians. The same is true of the sea monsters, who are none other than human sailors coming from Europe. The Urg are gigantic birds of prey. The Australians' wars

display utter loathing for their enemies and intent to destroy them. What all these enemies have in common is their animality.

This is particularly true in the case of the Fondins, perhaps because of their close proximity to the Australians. Racault considers the Australians' war against animality to be the result of their fear of animal contamination: "C'est que la proximité avec l'animal est aussi une promiscuité; elle attente au principe essentiel de séparation radicale du monde animal et du monde humain, elle met en jeu un insidieux danger de contagion de l'humanité 'pleine' par le contact avec l'univers bestial" (UN 505). Many elements of the Australians' war against the Fondins support Racault's conclusion. According to Sadeur, they look upon sexual contact with the Fondins in the same manner that Europeans regard sexual relations with animals (215). Likewise, they refuse to eat their food, "ils croient que c'est trop abaisser leur condition, que de se servir de leurs viandes" (215).

The Fondins fail to meet the Australians' standards of humanity. Lacking the perfection of the Australians, they are simply half-men. Correspondingly, the Australians consider them inferior creatures. The Fondins' animality explains the Australians' complete disregard for their lives, their willingness to exterminate them as if they were pests, and practices such as the taking of trophies: "Il faut savoir que c'est la coutume des Australiens de couper toutes les oreilles de ceux qu'ils tuent au combat, & d'en faire une ceinture. Celui qui en apporte davantage est estimé plus genereux, & tel étoit en la prise de l'Isle, qui en avoit apporté jusqu'à deux cents" (215). The Australians' actions indicate more than a desire to defeat the Fondins; they wish to eliminate them: "avant que de faire aucune violence à tous les forts [...] ils s'emparerent de tous les dehors, & de tous les vaisseaux qui étoient à l'entour. Leur dessein étoit d'ôter tous les moyens aux Fondins de fuir & de pouvoir échapper...on alla par toutes les villes & bourgades,

on en força cinq assez promptement qui contenoient plus de quarante mille feux, avec un carnage effroyable de tous ceux qu'on rencontroit" (200-01). The Australians engage in a horrific genocide: "Le massacre qui se fit, feroit fremir les plus resolu, si on le pouvoit dépeindre. On voyoit le pere, la mere & cinq ou six enfants egorgez les uns sur les autres : On voyoit des ruisseaux de sang qui couloient au milieu des ruës, Enfin on ne pardonnoit à personne de quelle âge & de quelle condition qu'il fut" (202-03). The Australians' slaughter is complete and as if to wipe out all traces of the half-men, the Australians destroy the land itself and cover it with water.

The Australians' most constant adversaries are the Urg. They are also the Australians' only purely animal enemy, lacking even the designation demi-homme. Despite this fact, they do evidence reasoning ability during their attacks and in defense and so represent a disconcerting combination of animal form and reason. The same sort of common goal and unification of action the Australians exhibit during battle which Sadeur attributes to reason, the Urg display during attack: "elles paroissent quelques fois quatre & cinq cents ensemble avec un bruit qui cause de la frayeur aux plus resolu. On jugeroit facilement qu'il y a de la conduite particuliere entre elles, & qu'elles forment une espece de corps d'armée pour assaillir les Australiens" (209). The Urg also make an apparent connection between the Australian's weapons and their ability to harm them, another sign of reasoning: "Je vîs une action au dernier combat où j'assistay, qui merite d'être racontée. Un Urg enleva la hallebarde de mon compagnon ; un autre Urg à même tems se saisit de sa personne ; je voulus le deffendre avec ma hallebarde : mais un troisième Urg me l'arracha" (210-11). The Urg work in unison to overcome their prey exactly as human or Australian armies coordinate their attacks in war. Sadeur most likely finds the occurrence worthy of report because of the order of the attack which implies a reasoning ability he does not want to attribute to these animals.

When he attempts to explain the motives behind their attacks, he limits the possibilities to the passions: “Je ne sais si c’est la faim, où l’amour, ou la rage qui les transportent : mais ils sont comme desesperez en ces rencontres ; & si cette humeur continuoit long-tems, le pays seroit malheureux & inhabitable” (211). The Urg’s extreme passion is a sign of their animality, and there is indication that their motives for attack rest simply on their own efforts to survive. The Urg have “une ardeur extreme pour la conjonction charnelle” (181) that betrays their survival instincts. Sadeur also describes the Urg as “oiseaux sauvages & carnaciers” (190), and notes that they “campent indifferemment par tout où elles trouvent mieux à se repaître” (209). The Urg are carnivorous birds and the Australians are a viable food source. The frequency of the attacks is another example of their animality. They follow a seasonal, migratory pattern which Sadeur associates with sea changes: “On remarque que la mer continuant à être orageuse les cinq & six jours de suite, ils entrent dans cette mauvaise constitution, soit parce qu’ils ne peuvent prendre les poissons necessaires à leur nourriture, soit parce que ce trouble de mer altere leurs cerveaux” (211). Sadeur attributes the migratory pattern to changes in the brain due to external stimuli, ignoring the possibility that the migration is the result of deliberative reasoning.

The indication of Urg reasoning ability is possible impetus for the Australians’ plans to eradicate them. They use the same methods they employ to annihilate the Fondins, the destruction of their island habitats (211). The Urg are more formidable opponents than the Fondins, harassing the Australians year after year despite their attempts to remove them from neighboring islands. Sadeur describes his own actions in war against the Urg and his descriptions make it clear that the Fondin pay more dearly for the advances they make against the Urg than against their other enemies: “Je me suis trouvé trois fois en ce combat. Nous perdîmes au premier six hommes, au second huit, & au dernier trois, & aux trois combats

ensemble, nous ne tuâmes que 7. De ces oyseaux” (210). When it comes to combat, the Urg give reason to argue for their superiority by demonstrating their excellence in terms of loss and gain. The costly struggles to which the Urg submit the Australians also represent the difficulty of the task of removing animality from the Australian continent. They show no sign of completion: “Il est vray qu’ils ont fait, & font encore tous les jours des choses inconcevables pour les détruire [...] Mais quoy qu’ils ayent fait, & quoy qu’ils fassent, je ne vois aucune apparence d’en pouvoir venir à bout” (177).

The Australians’ efforts to eliminate animals are the result of an evolution in their attitudes towards animality. The Urg are one example of this evolution. These birds of prey that now plague the Australians once served them as exemplary mounts:

Ces animaux qui sont fort cruels etant sauvages, s’apprivoisent facilement, & deviennent si domestiques & si amis de l’homme, étant apprivoisez, que nos chiens ne le sont pas davantage. On en conservoit encore dans le seizain de Burd, quand j’arrivay dans la terre Australe, qui portoient un homme avec plus de facilité qu’un cheval d’Espagne. (181)

At one point in time the Australians tamed and exploited the Urg, but now wage endless war against them with their extinction as ultimate goal. Other animals in the service of the Australians are currently at the threshold of similar persecution.

The Australians do still employ other domesticated animals, but Sadeur’s account makes it clear that in nearly every case Australian attitudes towards these animals are changing. The Australians keep something akin to a small monkey as companion but are in the process of banishing them from numerous locations: “On les a banny de plusieurs sezains, à cause qu’ils étoient trop importuns” (173). These creatures are so dependent upon contact with the Australians that seclusion often brings about their demise (173), meaning that the Australian practice of restraining them in seclusion could bring about their extinction. The destruction of

another species, the Lums or Hums, which the Australians use to cultivate, is also underway: “On les a cependant détruit dans la plupart des sezains, à cause des ordures qu’ils causent, & parce qu’ils ne sont utiles que sept ou huit jours de l’année. Il faut les tenir enfermés le reste du tems, ou souffrir des dégâts assez facheux, qu’ils font tant pour vivre que pour se divertir” (174). Yet another species, the Fuefs, a camel-like species that the Australians use for transportation is also experiencing persecution: “On a conclu dans nôtre seizain de les détruire, tant parce que les oyseaux carnaciers les pourchassent avec avidité, que parce qu’il faut employer beaucoup de tems à les entretenir, les loger, & les conduire : ce qu’on juge indigne d’un homme, qui ne doit être occupé qu’à des sujets dignes de sa nature” (174-75). Contemporary Australians believe that taking care of animals is below them, and they are apparently less tolerant of sharing their space with them.

In addition to the animals above, there are three species of birds that live with the Australians, one, the Effs, a type of fowl, is also under persecution: “On commence à les bannir des seizains, parce qu’on n’en reçoit que de notables incommoditez dans les parterres” (175). Flower gardens take precedence over fowl in a vegetarian society. The other two species are songbirds and unlike other animals, they enjoy a privileged status in Australia. They have two redeeming qualities, “ils causent une certaine douceur d’esprit par leur gazouillement, qu’ils appellent Pacd, c’est à dire, divertissement de beatitude”, and “Ils ont cette propriété de sentir de fort loin les oyseaux carnaciers [Urgs], & de picquer les freres [the Australians] pour les âvertir” (175). The birds’ principal service is as protection from the Australians’ most virulent enemy. So long as the Urg represent a threat to the Australians, they are likely to tolerate the songbirds’ presence, but they are so tame that “il les faut souvent chasser de dessus les personnes” (175), which, given the reasons for the elimination of other animal species in Australia, may provide

reason enough for their extermination should the war with the Urg ever come to an end. As Moreau correctly concludes, the ultimate goal of the Australians appears to be a continent free of animal presence: “À l’évidence, l’animalité n’a pas sa place en Terre australe, soit qu’elle dérange le bel ordonnement d’un monde rationalisé à l’extrême ou qu’elle en menace plus fondamentalement la pureté” (HBF 55-56). Animal presence corrupts the perfection of hermaphroditic society.

The animals discussed in the preceding paragraphs are the only animals in Australia. Insects, rodents, and other small animals are unknown to the Australians (172). Outside of the minor disturbances of their domestic animals and the attacks by the Urg, Australia is free of pests: “Toutes les bêtes sales, venimeuses, & nuisantes ne se trouvent pas dans toute l’étendue de leurs quartiers” (172). They undertake measures to free their territory from the Urg and they are currently banishing their domestic animals from larger and larger expanses of their land. They make war against the half-men, who show too many signs of animality to count as human, and they minimize their own animality. They do so by hiding and minimizing the humiliating physical activities they associate with animality like eating, defecation, and reproduction, and by emphasizing the importance of reason. Nonetheless, Suains’ arguments against an immortal soul demonstrate the affinity between the Australians and animals that exists in their earthly existence and death. To truly obtain their goal of an Australian continent free of animality, the only solution is to raze their own island and cover it with water as they did to the island the Fondins had occupied.

Sadeur’s Animality

Like the Australians, Sadeur harbors prejudices against animality. As a result, he admires Australian society. His own animality, however, makes it impossible to integrate into it. His tale is of a man who rejects his own animality, as symbolized by his departure from the animal island, but who must in the end recognize it, ultimately coming to accept it. His flight from animality begins on the animal island, where his prejudices impede him from communicating with its inhabitants, but his prejudices appear earlier in his journey to the south, in his commentary on the peoples he observes.

Sadeur's early ideas of animality differ from those of the Australians. They strive to rid themselves of earthly attachment and material needs as much as possible. Sadeur's observations of Congo civilization lead him to conclude that need is necessary to preserve one's humanity. The land of the people of Congo shares many features with the Australian continent that eliminate need, including fruits which meet all their needs for sustenance: "La terre de ces quartiers surtout entre les rivières du Zair & de Cariza produit des fruits en abondance sans qu'on se mette en peine de la labourer. Et ces fruits sont si délicats & si nourrissants : qu'ils contentent & rassasient pleinement ceux qui en mangent" (37-38). Likewise, the attitudes of the Congo people towards possessions resemble the Australians'. They "méprise[nt] le gain", have only rudimentary housing, and do not even have beds, making use of simple mats or lying on the bare ground instead (38).

Although he later admires Australian society, Sadeur finds nothing to admire in the Congo people: "Il est constant que l'abondance de leur contrée les rend négligents, paresseux, simples & stupides. Après les avoir quelque temps considérés, je fus forcé de confesser que notre nature devenoit paresseuse, quand elle ne manquoit de rien : & que l'oisiveté la rendoit brute & comme insensible" (37). Living in conditions analogous to Australia, the Congo people

are more like animals, “brute & comme insensible,” than men to Sadeur. They lack the perfection of the Australians, and Sadeur concludes that toil is necessary to a human existence: “Toutes ces considerations me faisoient concevoir un peuple qui n’étant point obligé de travailler vit avec quelque iustice dans une oysiveté qui le rend pesant, negligent, endormy, dedaigneux, & sans perfection : puis que la perfection demande de l’exercice, du travail & de la peine” (38). Sadeur demonstrates a preconceived notion of perfection based on materiality. Humans must labor “sous peine de devenir pierre” (37), and the principal difference between inert matter and humans is apparently the effort humans employ to ensure their continued existence. The Congo people put little effort towards this goal and so are more like animals or stones. Sadeur must consider their idleness an imperfection, and so he considers their lives without need far from the Australian paradise he comes to know.

It is, in fact unworthy of continuation: “Et ainsi bien loin que la beatitude consiste à posséder ce qu’on desire, quand même on ne desireroit rien que de bon : nous devons estre asseurez qu’un homme qui ne souhaite plus rien en ce monde devient stupide, & ne merite plus de vivre, puis qu’il est incapable d’agir” (38). Although Sadeur believes that his reasoning leads to the conclusion that the Congo people are less human because of their lack of need, the Australians believe that an attachment to possessions and the toil necessary to acquire them are animal characteristics that are below them to the point that even the act of eating itself they associate with animality.³² Sadeur’s attitude during his Congo sojourn reflects his bias for European norms. They form the standard for humanity by which he judges the Congolese. Since they fail to meet these standards, they are imperfect and animal-like.

³² The similarities between Congo and Australian plenty, and Sadeur’s judgment of the consequences of a life without need may reveal something about Australian culture, as Racault reads it: “Comment ne pas songer ici à la melancolie secrète des Australiens, eux aussi comblés de tous les dons de la nature et délivrés de l’aiguillon du désir?” (UN 464).

J. Max Patrick situates Sadeur's opinions of the Congo people in the larger framework of Foigny's own personality and life lessons: "He realized that his imperfect nature could find no resting place in this world; he learned that liberty is not enough for ordinary mankind, that danger and uncertainty are the spice of an imperfect life, and that he would find it as hard to adapt himself to a perfect society as to that of Europe" (742). It makes no difference whether or not Sadeur admires or condemns the society in which he finds himself; he is a misfit.

Sadeur's judgment of the Congolese has little relation to their ability or inability to use reason, though Sadeur displays his own animality by reacting instinctively in life-threatening situations. In the wake of a shipwreck, he owes his survival to a natural instinct for self-preservation, and his reason abandons him for the duration of the ordeal:

Je me trouvay par je ne sçays quelle rencontre, proche de la porte de la chambre du Capitaine qui se souleva & commença à flotter. Comme je perissois, je m'y attachay plutôt par un effort naturel, que par aucun raisonnement ou par quelque conduite. Je ne puis dire le tems que je restay de la sorte, parce que j'étois troublé, & sans aucun jugement. (34)

Sadeur's description illustrates action without deliberation, although the action by which he saves himself is equivalent to one taken as the result of a deliberative reasoning process. The possibility of confusing reasonable and instinctive behaviors adds difficulty to the question of animal reasoning ability, since the animal mind is unknowable for humans. In Sadeur's personal case, there is no question because he acts by instinct. His estimation is that this is the case on all occasions when his life is in danger.

During the shipwreck prior to his arrival on the animal island, he reflects upon this phenomenon: "Je diray à ma confusion qu'étant éloigné des prises de la mort, j'ay toujours fait paroistre beaucoup d'indifference pour la vie. Mais les dangers evidens se presentant, je n'ay jamais été capable d'aucune autre pensée que de celle de pouvoir être sauvé" (50). Sadeur's will

to preserve his life is an overwhelming instinctive response to danger, apparently beyond his control to inhibit. The instinct for self-preservation divests him of his ability to reason. In addition his method of saving himself indicates the bodily nature of his survival instinct, as Ronzeaud points out: “Il met donc son salut au compte d’un réflexe naturel de survie, inscrit dans l’instinct humain, comme les marques de sa souffrance seront irréfutablement inscrites dans la chair, puisqu’il conservera les doigts recourbés pour s’être si longtemps agrippé à sa planche” (121). As seen above, Foigny ties body functions and physicality to animality in his descriptions of Australian society; the role of the body in Sadeur’s survival instincts are sign of his animality.

Just as Sadeur is unable to use his judgment throughout the events of his first shipwreck, so it is during the second: “ma nature eut assez de forces pour supporter toutes ces detresses, jusqu’à ce qu’ayant perdu & sens & connoissance, je ne sais bonnement ny ce que je devins, ny par quel moyen je fus préservé” (50). When Sadeur encounters a couple of Urg, he throws himself into the brush in another act of self-preservation which precedes a period of near senselessness: “Je me jettay d’une extrême vitesse sous des arbrisseaux voisins, attendant avec une grande suspension d’esprit ce qui devoit suivre” (52). All these instances show that Sadeur acts instinctively to preserve his life, thus displaying his animal nature.

When Sadeur arrives in Australia, Suains argues that efforts to preserve one’s life are unreasonable and therefore below humanity. In addition, Suains believes that the truly reasonable course of action is to end one’s life filled with suffering as soon as possible. Sadeur’s predicament on the animal island also pits reason against the instinct of self-preservation, tying it rather to the choice of death. Hiding from the carnivorous bird creatures, Sadeur’s wits eventually return to him. When they do, he chooses to confront his end following a line of reasoning that parallels Suains’s: “Enfin ie rentray aucunement en moy-même, & faisant

reflexion sur la misere où ie me voyois reduit, ie conclus qu'il valoit mieux perir bien tôt, que de chercher de languir davantage. 'Apres tout,' disois ie, 'c'est une necessité que je perisse d'une façon ou d'une autre'" (52). Sadeur recognizes the inevitability of death, the suffering associated with life, and comes to the same conclusion as the Australian's. Given the choice between a life of suffering bound to end and repose in death, death is the reasonable choice.

Sadeur's early encounters with danger also illustrate another facet of his animality: the power of the passions over behavior. The Australians associate the passions with animality, and exhibit very little emotion over the course of their lives. Reason, not the passions, guides the Australians' conduct as much as possible. Even in times of war, their actions are calm and ordered. Sadeur, however, loses his ability to reason in life-threatening situations. Moreover, while an Urg carries him in its claws just prior to his discovery by the Australians, bodily stimuli incite his passions and spur him to animal-like attack: "La douleur qu'il me causa m'étant enfin insupportable, & me portant dans une espece de furie, je me jettay brusquement à son col, & ie trouvay assez de forces dans mon desespoir pour luy arracher les yeux à belles dents" (60). Sadeur's reaction to his pain leads to quick, instinctive action similar to those he takes to save his life after shipwrecks. It differs in that it is not without passion, rage accompanies it. Sadeur's behavior is not unlike Urg behavior in this respect. Sadeur later supposes the Urgs' behavior in combat to be a product of rage or desperation (211), drawing a link between himself and animals. In addition, Sadeur uses his teeth for attack, more common among animals.

Other passions afflict Sadeur, most particularly, sexual desire. Hermaphroditism among the Australians allows them to be free of carnal desire, since they are not dependent upon others for procreation. Carnal desire is a by-product of the separation of the sexes, an animal trait. Contact with the Australians that does not incite their desire produces signs of arousal in Sadeur

that alert the Australians to his imperfect, animal nature: “Il arriva pendant les six premiers mois de mon arrivée, que les caresses extraordinaires des freres me causerent quelque mouvement déréglé, dont quelques uns s’apperceurent, qui en furent si fort scandalisez, qu’ils me quitterent” (137). In other instances, Sadeur’s desire causes him to instigate contact with an Australian brother to “l’exciter à ce que nous appellons plaisir” (85). Sadeur’s sexual desire is one of the factors in the Australians’ determination that he is not fully human (85).

Sadeur is unable to satisfy his desires among the Australians for over thirty years when they make war against the Fondins. He is very conscious of the Australians’ aversion to sexuality in all forms, yet when the opportunity to satisfy his desires presents itself, he is unable to stifle his lust: “l’entray dans une maison qui paroissoit plus considerable que les autres, ou je trouvay une venerable matrone avec deux filles de vingt cinq à vingt six ans, qui se jetterent à mes pieds. Ce fut alors que l’amour me transporta, & que les charmes de leurs visages & de leurs seins nuds, me firent perdre & raison & connoissances” (201). As in situations of great danger, Sadeur’s reason flees him. He reacts instinctively: “Je les relevay, & les ayant embrassées j’en pris une qui me donna la liberté” (201). Had Sadeur’s reason remained with him, he might have chosen to resist his inclination if possible, for a sex act with a Fondin poses a great danger for him.

The Australians catch Sadeur in the act, and the incident provokes a formal trial. Sadeur’s trial really begins when he first arrives among the Australians and his differences cause his hosts to question his humanity despite his hermaphroditism. The question facing the Australians is whether or not Sadeur is a human, Australian nature being the standard, or half-man. Sadeur’s fate depends on the outcome of the question, as Suains explains to him:

Je sais bien, dit il, qu’étant arrivé dans un pays où tu vois plusieurs choses contraires à celles qu’on pratique au tien, tu as quelque raison d’être surpris &

étonné. Mais comme c'est une coutume inviolable parmi nous de ne souffrir aucun demi homme, & que nous les reconnoissons par le sexe & par les actions : bien que tes deux sexes te sauvent, tes façons de faire te condamnent : & il faut que tu les corrige pour prolonger ta vie. (87)

Suains serves as Sadeur's protector, presumably because he is curious to learn more of European society, but also because he finds it difficult to accept that Sadeur is a half-man. If Sadeur is a half-man, he represents an impermissible animal presence in the midst of Australian society. As Racault remarks, Sadeur's presence in Australia as a hermaphrodite that exhibits strong animal qualities challenges Australian ideology of separation of humans and animals, exposing its arbitrary nature: "En installant au sein de la société australienne, par sa personne et par ses actes, la représentation concrète de la continuité et de la solidarité des règnes, le narrateur fera éclater le caractère purement idéologique de ce principe de séparation" (UN 496).

Suains consideration of Sadeur's nature reveals the arbitrary divisions between humans and animals:

...je n'ay pû qu'à peine être persuadé que tu fusses des demi hommes, 1. parce que je connus que tu avois beaucoup de cœur. 2. Je te vis sans les pieces qui les couvrent.³³ 3. Je vis que tu avois toutes les marques d'un homme entier. 4. J'aperceus un front large & un visage des nôtres. 5. Et j'ay ensuite remarqué que tu raisonnois en plusieurs choses. Ces raisons t'ont conservé, depuis que tu as découvert que tu étois malicieux. (88)

Three of the five reasons concern Sadeur's physical appearance, not his mind, although the Australians privilege reason. Suains' reasons betray the arbitrary nature of the connection the Australians make between their physical form and reason. More in conformity with their disdain for corporality are their reasons for doubting Sadeur's humanity. These include his aforementioned sexual desires, his curiosity concerning Australian reproduction, and his initial

³³ Sadeur arrives in Australia nude as a result of his combat with a pair of Urg.

aversion to the Australian custom of going nude (85). The last even contradicts Suains' second reason in favor of Sadeur's humanity.

After discussions with Sadeur about European beliefs and customs, Suains concludes that Europeans are animals deserving at best of the appellation half-men:

Ton raisonnement, —répondit-il—, vous suppose ce que nous vous croyons, à savoir des bêtes : & si on ne peut raisonnablement vous appeler telles, sans quelques limites, parce que vous avez plusieurs marques d'humanité : comme vous partagez entre la bête & l'homme : le plus qu'on puisse accorder, pour ne point épargner la vérité, est de vous nommer des demi-hommes. (92)

Suains' conclusion means that Europeans are no different than the Fondins whom they also term half-men. As a mix of human and animal characteristics, Sadeur is a monster. The Australians hold a traditional belief concerning the generation of the half-men that makes clear their monstrosity by giving them an animal origin.

The Australian myth supposes the beginnings of the half-men to be due to the corruption of their perfection. An animal instigates this corruption by mating with a human, read Australian, against his will, and the resulting offspring, a boy and a girl, show “plusieurs signes de malice & beaucoup de brutalité” (169). Moreau points out the connection between a preoccupation with bestiality and the affinity between human and animal nature: “La singularité animale n'est jamais très loin du monstrueux. Elle est en même temps toujours dangereusement proche de l'homme (sauvage)—ce dont témoignerait par exemple l'attrait toujours renouvelé des voyageurs pour les crimes de bestialité” (HBF 50). In this case, humanity, half-men to the Australians, is actually the product of the mating of an animal with a hermaphrodite, and so the link between human and animal nature is explicit.

The division of sexes is in Australian terms sign enough of imperfection and animality, but the nature of the offspring is also evident in their diet. The serpent that spawns them

originally nourishes them with fish and small animals. When the two are grown they mate and multiply, “ne vivant que de chasse & de pêche comme des bêtes carnacieres” (169). Eating flesh marks their lack of perfection, being contrary to the Australian diet which consists only of fruit. The serpent’s mate suffers terribly and leaves his offspring to return to his people, presumably the Australians, while the half-men go on to prosper and expand their territory, thus explaining the similarities between the half-men neighboring Australia and Europeans. The myth serves to explain the similarities between the half-men and Australians without harming the exalted conception the Australians have of their perfection. The half-men’s better qualities are the result of their Australian ancestor, while their lesser qualities stem from their serpent father. The myth is less flattering for the half-men, as Lise Leibacher Ouvrard makes clear by pointing out that the story is a mix of “le souvenir de la Chute, l’inceste, la bestialité et la gémellité” that “propose que la dualité monstrueuse est la marque de l’humain européen” (55). In opposition to the perfection in unity that the Australians represent, humans are an inferior breed of monstrous dualities.

The Australian myth is not far from a legend surrounding a people Sadeur encounters during his travels to the south. The people Sadeur names “Caffres” or “Tordi” also have animal origins. In this case, however, a human instigates the bestial act that sparks their existence: “Nous apprîmes donc qu’un homme du pays ayant élevé une petite Tigresse, devint si familier avec cette bête, qu’il l’aima charnellement & commit le crime infame avec elle, d’où suivit un homme monstre qui a donné l’origine à ces Sauvages qu’on ne peut humaniser” (47). Just as in the case of the Australian myth, animality signals lack of perfection, lack of humanity. Lack of hermaphroditism demonstrates half-men imperfection for the Australians by its similarity to animals’ bodies, and the bodies of the Tordi give sign of their imperfection by their similarity to

their animal progenitor: “Une preuve invincible de cette histoire, c’est que leurs faces & leurs pieds ont de grands rapports avec les Tigres : & leurs corps mêmes ne sont pas exems de plusieurs taches pareilles à celles de ces animaux” (47). Sadeur believes, much as the Australians do, that animality is a sign of imperfection.

Moreau reads the Caffres’ bodily form as a challenge to human superiority: “Soutenir...la possibilité de races de monstres anthropomorphes, comme cette ‘nation’ de Caffres, c’est témoigner d’un dangereux brouillage entre les espèces animale et humaine et menacer la supériorité ontologique de l’homme, créé par Dieu à l’image de son Créateur” (HBF 52). The Caffres’ monstrosity conflicts with Sadeur’s concept of humanity just as Sadeur’s combination of hermaphroditism and animal characteristics oppose the Australians’.

Sadeur enters Australia with prejudices against animality and after his discussions with Suains, he is not far from sharing the Australians’ view of half-men. His observations of Australian civilization and Suains’ argumentation lead Sadeur to acknowledge Australian superiority: “Je fus plus de huit iours comme forcé à faire des comparaisons continuelles de ce que nous étions par rapport à ce que ie voyois. Je ne pouvois que ie n’admirasse leur conduite opposée à nos deffauts : & j’étois honteux d’être obligé d’avouër en moy même que nous étions si éloignez de leurs perfections” (109). These reflexions even cause Sadeur to question his own humanity (109). For Sadeur, Australian superiority lies principally in their detachment from the body, freedom from the passions, and the degree to which reason guides their conduct and forms their society:

Cette union inviolable de tous, sans qu’ils sachent même ce que peut être la division ; ce détachement de tous les biens, sans qu’ils connoissent, comment on peut les aimer ; cette pureté inviolable entre eux, sans qu’on puisse savoir comment ils produisent les enfants. Enfin cette attache si étroite à la raison, qui les unit tous, & les porte à tout ce qui est bon & nécessaire, sont des fruits de

personnes consommées en tout ce que nous pouvons concevoir naturellement de parfait... (110)

The Australians are the epitome of Sadeur's European ideals because of their "union inviolable" and their "pureté." Related to Sadeur's recognition of Australian unity, here, is the importance Ronzeaud attaches to equating unity, "plénitude," with perfection in the process by which Foigny equates humans with animals: "Si l'Australien se hisse, par sa plénitude, au rang des Dieux, l'Européen est ravalé à celui des animaux" (71). Ronzeaud believes that the conflict between humanity and animality points to an overarching conflict between division and unity that characterizes Foigny's text: "Le clivage entre la bestialité et l'humanité est bien encore celui qui sépare l'unité (corps/esprit, mâle/femelle, rationalité/comportement) de la dualité où ces instances sont tragiquement et conflictuellement séparées" (159). Human dualities denote a lack of perfection and indicate human/animal commonality.

Europeans like Sadeur do not live up to the ideals they hold. When Sadeur enumerates their defects, his description is the polar opposite of Australian excellence:

Mais lors que je venois à donner la liberté à toutes nos imperfections de s'opposer à tant de vertus : quand nos dissensions continuelles, nos querelles & nos boucheries effroyables de frere à frere se presentoient à mes yeux : quand cette soif insatiable d'en avoir à tout prix & à toute risque paroissoit : lors que les desordres honteux de nos lubricitez me confondoient : enfin quand je me voyois obligé de confesser que la passion beaucoup plus que la raison nous conduisoit ; je l'avouë, j'admirois ce peuple, & je souhaitois que l'exemple d'un vray homme pût servir à confondre la vanité de plusieurs, qui faisant gloire d'être éclairés des lumieres surnaturelles vivent comme des bêtes : pendant que ceux qui ne sont conduit que de l'humanité font parêître tant d'exemples de vertu. (111)

Sadeur highlights the sensual aspects of humanity, their "lubricitez," and arrives at the conclusion that humans "vivent comme des bêtes" from his observation that the passions guide human behavior. The Australian life according to reason is superior to European conduct which

supposes “lumières surnaturelles” as its guiding principle. Sadeur depicts the Australian as the “vray homme.”

Sadeur’s hermaphroditic form allows him to share in the illusion of being Australian, but despite the many years he spends in Australian society, he is unable to fully integrate into it. In the end, circumstances force him to recognize his animality.

Sadeur’s relations with the Fondin force a resolution to the question of his nature. Sadeur acts without deliberation or consideration of his future when he mates with the Fondin, but he returns to his senses when his Australian companions discover his transgression. Their disapproval triggers the transformation from lust to shame: “Je vis bien par les traits de visage qu’ils firent paroître, que j’étois perdu [...] Je ne savois ny ce que je devois devenir, ny à quoy me resoudre, & je ne pouvois plus envisager un Australien sans honte. Aussi tôt qu’ils s’approchoient de moy, la confusion me contraignoit de baisser la tête” (202). When Sadeur returns to his ship and departs for Australia from Fondin territory, his shame evolves to despondency and self-loathing: “Je retournay dans un vaisseau, où je fis semblant d’être blessé & hors de combat : & en effet j’avois l’esprit si abbatu d’ennuy & de tristesse, que j’avois peine à me soutenir” (202). Sadeur’s reactions imply that he is in the process of realizing his own failure to meet Australian standards for humanity, and the fact that his hermaphroditism is not of the same order as the Australians’. His differences are apparent from the beginning of his stay and questions concerning his true nature pursue him incessantly.

Sadeur reaches the conclusion that his essence is fundamentally different from the Australians at the same time they do. At the end of his tale he reveals that his attempts to assimilate Australian culture have been in vain: “Il est aisé de juger de tout ce que j’ay avancé que la difference de mon naturel & la contraire education que j’avois receuë me rendoit

incompatible au[x] Australiens” (213). The Australians formally accuse Sadeur of not fighting during the war against the Fondins and even showing compassion for their plight, of mating with a Fondin, of eating Fondin food, and of posing malicious questions. Sadeur acknowledges during his account of the events the compassion he feels for the Fondins: “je ne pouvois les voir égorger, sans une compassion qui ne fut que trop connue de plusieurs Australiens” (201), and his lack of participation in their slaughter: “Bien loin d’avoir tué, j’avois témoigné un extrême regret de voir la sanglante boucherie de ces pauvres malheureux” (215). In the face of his formal accusations he admits their truth, and declares publicly his true nature, now obvious. He believes that since he is a half-man, his transgressions are merely the natural expression of his true nature, and offers this reasoning as a defense:

...j’ajoutay qu’effectivement j’étois criminel de ce dont on m’avoit accusé, mais que comme l’origine de tous ces crimes étoit ma propre nature, que tout le monde connoissoit Fondine, j’attestois leur raison si, m’ayant supporté bien que Fondin, on ne devoit pas aussi supporté les deffauts qui étoient inséparablement attachez à ma nature. Il est vray, disois-je, que j’ay témoigné de la tendresse pour ma nature [...] il est vray que j’ay fait paroître de la compassion pour des autres moy-même. Si je ne l’avois fait, je devrois passer pour dénaturé, et votre raison si clairvoyante m’estimeroit justement cruel. Si le malheur réduisoit un Australien à être entre les Fondins, je sais bien qu’on dira qu’il se détruiroit aussi tost, mais si nous pouvions supposer qu’il ne se détruist pas : ne seroit-il pas excusable, si dans une guerre contre sa propre nation, il paroissoit humain & avec de l’inclination pour ses freres. (216)

Australian attitudes and his own inability to assimilate their society force Sadeur to accept his own animality.

Sadeur’s position is comparable to that of animals in arguments for human superiority. Sadeur argues for relative worth. Judging animals by human standards, it is inevitable that animals will fail to meet them, but this does not mean that they are below humans in some absolute way. An animal that met these standards would be “dénaturé,” in essence, no longer an animal, just as Sadeur would no longer be true to his nature were he capable of perfectly

integrating into Australian society. He is not Australian, he is European, despite his hermaphroditism, and everyone knows that his true nature is identical to the Fondins'. Animals will never be human, and it is pointless to judge them poorly for being what they are, what everyone acknowledges them to be, and not being human. With this realization, Sadeur's relationship with the animal world changes.

His relationship with an Urg symbolizes this change. Combat with two Urgs precedes Sadeur's arrival in Australia. The taming of an Urg and the friendship that ensues precede his departure. Sadeur is aware of the reversal that reflects the change in his own attitude³⁴: "Je repetois cent fois en la [the Urg] maniant, 'ne se pourroit-il pas faire que comme je ne suis arrivé en ce pays que par la cruauté de ces bêtes, j'en puisse sortir par leur amitié ?'" (218). As might be expected from a creature whose primary occupation is acquiring food, the friendship begins with the offering of nourishment. The Urg remains true to its animal nature. Some reasoning is apparent in Sadeur's description of events, but hunger causes its violence to abate and leads to its acceptance of human presence: "Ma bête prise fit deux jours fort la mauvaise, quand on vouloit s'en approcher. Mais enfin voyant qu'il n'y avoit nulle apparence d'échapper, & la faim la contraignant elle commença à s'addoucir & à souffrir que j'en approchasse pour luy presenter à manger" (218). The relationship between the Urg and Sadeur progresses from there, eventually entering an Androcles and the lion phase.

Their new relationship shares in the common features of the myth. It begins when Sadeur heals the leg of his Urg, which has suffered injury due to a tight leash. This act of compassion results in the extreme gratefulness of the Urg (219). It faithfully serves Sadeur until he decides

³⁴ Also aware of this parallel, along with Sadeur's cognizance of it, is Jean-Michel Racault (UN 463), who views Sadeur's voluntary use of an Urg to flee Australia as acceptance of his own alterity and animality (UN 457).

that it is time for him to complete the final leg of his return home alone, traveling, sleeping, and dining together (223-24). Sadeur's relationship with the Urg is a demonstration of his newfound comfort with his animal self.

His reaction to the Urg's distress following his attempt to abandon him represents the regret that results from his flight from animality. He initially mistakes the approaching Urg cries for a danger before the realization that his tame mount has found him changes his fear to joy:

“ma crainte se changea bien tôt en joye, lors que ie reconnus que c'étoit ma bête qui me cherchoit, & qui vint se ietter à mes pieds avec tant de caresses & tant de marques de douleurs de ce que ie l'avois quitté, que i'en avois pitié” (223). Following this reunion, Sadeur makes no

efforts to abandon the Urg, and upon its loss, he even regrets his decision to continue his voyage:

“La terre Australe se representoit à mon esprit avec tous ses avantages : l'isle que je venois de quitter avec mon oyseau me paroissoit infiniment commode : ‘j’y pouvois demeurer,’ disois-je, ‘sans danger, sans crainte, & même avec plaisir le reste de mes jours : mon oyseau auroit été ma garde assurée’” (224). Sadeur begins his voyages confident in the supremacy of European

culture. Australian society becomes the new pinnacle of civilization and a possible paradise, but life with the Urg on a desolate isle replaces this vision. What life with the Urg represents is an existence that conforms to Sadeur's true nature, supplying a place for his animality, allowing for a balance between passion and reason not possible in Australia or Sadeur's European home.

Although Sadeur loses this chance at paradise, his new attitudes remain. He once derided Congo civilization, but when he meets a stranger from a distant land during his stay in Madagascar that the others consider a savage, he immediately feels compassion for him despite the stranger's irregular and primitive appearance:

Cet homme approchoit fort de la taille des Australiens, son front & son menton étoient plus quarrés que longs, ses cheveux & tout son poil noir, son corps de

couleur brune, tout nud, à la reserve des parties honteuses qui étoient couvertes d'une écharpe assez delicates d'un pied de large. I'avouë qu'aussi-tôt que ie le vis, ie fus touché de compassion & porté d'un extreme desir de le conserver. (234)

Sadeur endeavors to communicate with the man and develops a close friendship with him. The stranger shows Sadeur the same loyalty his Urg mount had displayed, to the point of taking his own life when Sadeur communicates his intent to leave the island (237).

The stranger's death illustrates a point about the power of one's nature. He asks Sadeur to see that his body is thrown into the sea, since it is their property to drift to their homeland (237). The governor of Madagascar throws the body along with his six servants into the sea to test his words (238). The bodies do begin drifting to the east, the strangers servants follow their master's body "toujours éloignez de 2. pas" (238). When the governor orders the bodies separated, the bodies arrange themselves as they were before (238-39). Sadeur hypothesizes that the formation results from a difference in the strength of the magnetic qualities of the bodies as a result of both inherent and acquired forces: "I'aioutay que le corps du premier étoit sans doute plus aimanté, tant à raison d'une differente & d'une plus delicate nourriture, qu'à cause d'une naissance de parents plus considerables" (239). The differences account for the formation, but the attraction is dependant upon the land itself, "un veritable ayment au regard de tout ce qui en sortoit" (239). One's bodily properties are inescapable.³⁵

This magnetism offers a possible interpretation of Sadeur's journeys. He moves from isle to isle, leaving behind potential paradise as his true nature draws him continually home. Likewise, the formation of the bodies at sea raises similarities to Sadeur's flight from the animal island before arriving in Australia. The animals are in apparent deliberation before Sadeur flees from the island, but his action provokes the animals' pursuit. Once in the water, Sadeur looks

³⁵ Ronzeaud gives this episode broader application, adding the inability to escape one's culture to its symbolism (81).

back at the creatures: “Elles faisoient comme un grand u [as in the letter] renversé en nageant” (54). Sadeur is in the process of running from his animal nature, but the animals, who show no sign of attacking him prior to his flight, swim after him as if Sadeur draws them to him. The nearest animal feels the most attraction while those farther away feel less, resulting in a sharp curve. The attraction is inevitable, Sadeur’s animality is an integral part of his nature. Sadeur’s animal nature explains his transgression of Australian codes of conduct, and his acceptance of this nature allows him to appreciate the life he leads with his Urg. Sadeur continues home, indicating that it is human nature to live in conflict between one’s animal and spiritual qualities and without balance between the passions and reason.

Conclusion

La Terre australe connue follows one man’s journey from prejudice against animality, through his struggle to escape his own animal nature and, finally, his acceptance of it. Animality is nearly equivalent to the body and the passions, humanity with reason, in both the protagonist’s homeland and the utopian/dystopian³⁶ society he infiltrates. Foigny illustrates the conflict that dualistic thinking generates by pitting human nature against an ideal of what humanity should be. The protagonist’s ultimate acceptance of his true nature, in which the passions and reason coexist, accords with a Montaignian vision of human nature. Foigny also demonstrates that the problems that understanding reason as the quintessence of humanity entails do not find resolution by answering the question of whether or not mind is separate and distinct from the

³⁶ Foigny’s Australia presents both characteristics. Racault counters the prelapsarian characteristics of the society with its totalitarian results: “Indemnes des passions et des appetits, les Australiens de Foigny incarnent une surhumanité confinant à l’inhumain et gouvernée par un terrifiant totalitarisme de la Raison” (NPE 87). The text is in reality a “procès de l’utopie” (NPE 101), a term Racault borrows from Trousson.

body, or whether or not the soul is immortal. The protagonist believes body and mind separate and the soul immortal,³⁷ the Australians the contrary. Animal nature is an integral part of the discussions between Sadeur and the Australian Suains on the nature of the human soul, making it an example of the change in the rhetorical use of animals following the Gassendi-Descartes controversy. Despite the contrary opinions of the Australians and Sadeur, both hold that reason is the quintessence of humanity and both suffer from the experience of their animal qualities. The protagonist's circular journey suggests the ineluctability of this experience and the perpetuity of the conflict between body and mind.

³⁷ Sadeur speaks for Europeans in general when he affirms this belief:

...nous avons accoutumé de nous servir de cette façon de parler [changer du monde] pour faire connoître la separation de nôtre principale partie, que nous appelons nôtre ame, qui nous distinguant des bêtes nous fait raisonnables. Qu'il falloit être pis que stupide pour s'imaginer que le corps ne se changeât pas en terre : Que ce dont nous étions persuadez, étoit que ce qui nous faisoit raisonnables, se degageant des liens qui l'unissoit au corps, devenoit libre, & se portoit en un moment, au lieu que Dieu lui a destiné selon la qualité de ses actions. (129-30)

The reader easily notes that Sadeur's belief in an immortal soul and the potential for eternal reward does not free him from his struggles against his animality.

CONCLUSION

What holds all the works in this dissertation together is the rhetorical use of animals, although each work differs in its rhetorical goals. Montaigne's *Essais* explore animal nature with various rhetorical effects. The human-animal comparisons show the similarity between humans and animals and thereby eliminate any reason to suppose humans superior. The animal nature that Montaigne develops is hypothetical and incomplete. He relies on a human perspective to understand animals and admits his inability to know their inner life. He arrives at his conclusion in favor of a nature common to both humans and animals to show that conclusions to the contrary are faulty as much as to define animal nature. His arguments for human-animal commonality are therefore a means of humbling humanity and challenging the preeminence of reason. Overall, the primary purpose of Montaigne's animal anecdotes in the "Apologie" is to uncover human nature and situate humanity with respect to animals and to God.

In the *Dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens*, La Mothe Le Vayer also uses animals to explore human nature. He examines a multitude of social customs and human behavior while using animal examples to demonstrate that social customs are arbitrary and human behavior has parallels in the animal world. Comparisons with animals also challenge human pretensions of supremacy and disparage human reasoning ability. The titles of his nine dialogues show that exhibiting animal nature is not his primary focus. The only title with any reference to animals is "Des Qualités des ânes de ce temps." The aim of the absurd arguments in favor of donkey superiority in this text is to highlight human inadequacies, and to make the reader laugh. La Mothe Le Vayer's comedic style ridicules human presumption, and human-animal comparisons are integral to his project.

Descartes's *Discours de la méthode* moves the rhetorical use of animals in a new direction. The animal-machine appears in the text to mark a clear distinction between humans and animals on the basis of the possession of an immaterial soul. Human nature and the human soul are the real subjects of the *Discours*, and following the publication of the *Discours*, animal nature and questions about the immateriality and immortality of the human soul exist side by side.

Descartes's debate with Gassendi over the material in the *Méditations métaphysiques* intensifies the link between animal nature and the nature of the human soul. Gassendi objects to Descartes's proofs for an immaterial soul and uses animal examples repeatedly in his *Disquisitio Metaphysica* to counter Descartes's position. An examination of Gassendi's animal theory shows that there is little difference between his theory and Descartes's, which lends credence to the conclusion that Gassendi's primary concern in his debate with Descartes is the nature of the human soul and not animal nature.

The animal-machine and the Gassendi-Descartes controversy impact the rhetorical use that follows them. Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* questions human superiority by means of human-animal comparisons similar à la Montaigne et La Mothe Le Vayer, but the influence of the Gassendi-Descartes controversy manifests in one particular passage. Recourse to animal examples opens the protagonist's conversations about the nature of the human soul with a youth on the moon. These conversations are representative of a change in the rhetorical use of animals that follows the publication of the *Discours*; animals are now central to discussions on the nature of the human soul.

The change in the rhetorical use of animals that Descartes incites is present in Gabriel de Foigny's *La Terre australe connue*. The materiality or immateriality of the soul is a

topic of debate in the text and human-animal comparisons comprise an important part of those discussions. The text also exhibits a preoccupation with the Cartesian mind-body split and associates the body with animality. Sadeur's journey is a flight from and return to his animal body, but the question at the core of Foigny's work is human nature.

The texts that this dissertation examines highlight a defining moment in the rhetorical use of animals: the publication of the *Discours de la méthode*. The chapters on Montaigne and La Mothe Le Vayer represent the traditional use of animal nature to question human supremacy. Those on Descartes and Gassendi explain the mechanism that triggers a change in the rhetorical use of animals. The chapters on Cyrano and Foigny illustrate the change. More research on the rhetorical use of animals may uncover other defining moments or different trends in the early modern period of French literature.

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